

Satoshi Wagahara
Illustration ■ Oniku
和ヶ原聡司
イラスト ■ 029

はたらく魔



Hataraku Maou-sama!

Volume 1

Written by 和ヶ原聡司 Wagahara Satoshi

Illustrated by 029

はなうらぐ魔ま



Satoshi Wagahara
Illustration ■ Oniku
和ヶ原聡司
イラスト ■ 029

履歴書



ふりがな	ま おう さだ お
氏 名	真奥 貞夫
考えた年	ことも月ない日生(満300歳)
性別	
ふりがな	ようきょうと しふやく させ

いいが勇者エミリア、俺は、
この世界で正社員に
なってみせるぜ！

年	月	
日本換算 寛保元年〜	寛政 11年頃	魔界のタ
明治3年		魔
平成 2×年		魔
平成 2×年		マグロナル
平成 2×年		

魔王サタン
ま おう さだ お
真奥貞夫

勇者に敗れ、異世界エンテ・イスラから日本にやってきた。日本征服のため正社員を目指しながら、幡ヶ谷駅前のファーストフード店マグロナルドでアルバイトをしている。



通勤

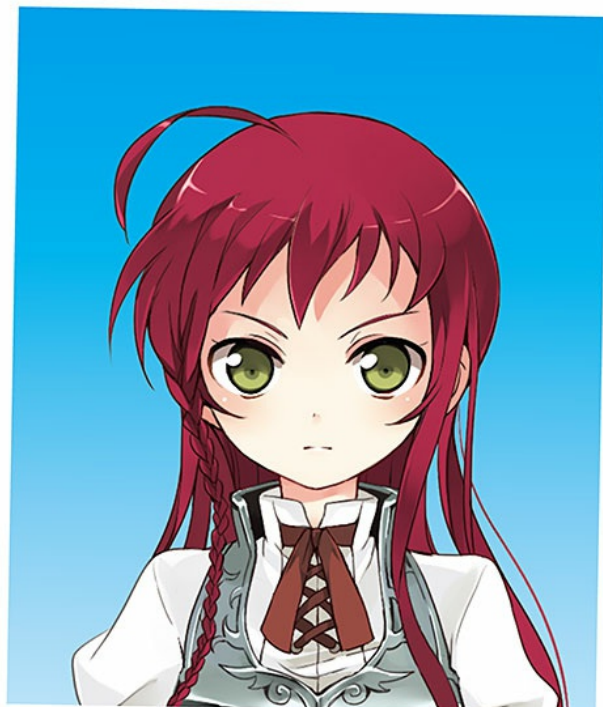
ものの

扶養家族の
有無

魔王軍の全

by 真奥

履歴書



ふりがな ゆ さ え み
氏 名 遊佐 恵美
—年—月—日 生
ふりがな と う きょう と す ぎ な
現 住 所 東京都杉並区永福町 501号
ア-バン 永福町 501号
電 021

バカじゃないの、魔王がスクランブルエッグでございの朝ご飯なんぞでー！

17才、20才、20才にしたい。

年	月	
平成×年		エンテ・イスラ
平成×年		家事手伝い
平成1×年		教会騎士団隊長
平成1×年		勇者就任
平成2×年		社員現職

勇者エミリア 遊佐恵美

異世界エンテ・イスラで、勇者として魔王と戦っていた。魔王を追って日本にやってくるが、生活費を稼ぐためテレホンアポインターをすることに。東京で魔王と再会するが……？

志望動機

本人希望欄

魔王を倒せるなら、でも、お風呂はもう

通勤時間

最寄り駅は京王井の頭線

永福町駅 電車と徒歩で約25分



履歴書



ふりがな あしやしろう

氏 名

芦屋四郎

日生(満15)

来た日はいつか

区笹塚

笹塚2

奥市

携帯

必要あり

by 真奥

もう少し計画的にお金を使っでは
いかがですか、魔王様。

悪魔大元帥
アルシエル

あしやしろう
芦屋四郎

魔王サタンとともに日本にやってきた腹心の部下。いつかエンテ・イスラに戻るべく、日々節約生活を送っている。主夫として魔王の生活を支える。

資格 調魔師免
ダーク

特技・趣味

志望動機

本人希望欄

通勤時間

様に
いる

保護者の
氏名

私が保護者だ!

誰のだよ!

by 真奥

履歴書



ふりがな ささき ちほ
氏 名
佐々木千穂
平成XX年 9月10日生(満16)
ふりがな どうきょうとしふや
現住所
1000

真奥さん、
やっぱり凄いでしょね！

年	月	
平成XX年	3	渋谷立
平成XX年	4	東京都立
平成XX年		二年生

さ さ き ち ほ
佐々木千穂

真奥と同じ幡ヶ谷駅前のファーストフード店マクドナルドでアルバイトをする高校二年生。目標に向かって働く真奥を慕っている。

本人希望欄

とにかく、精一杯がんばりたい。
真奥さんと一緒に仕事が……あ

通勤時間

徒歩10分

扶養家族の有無

なし

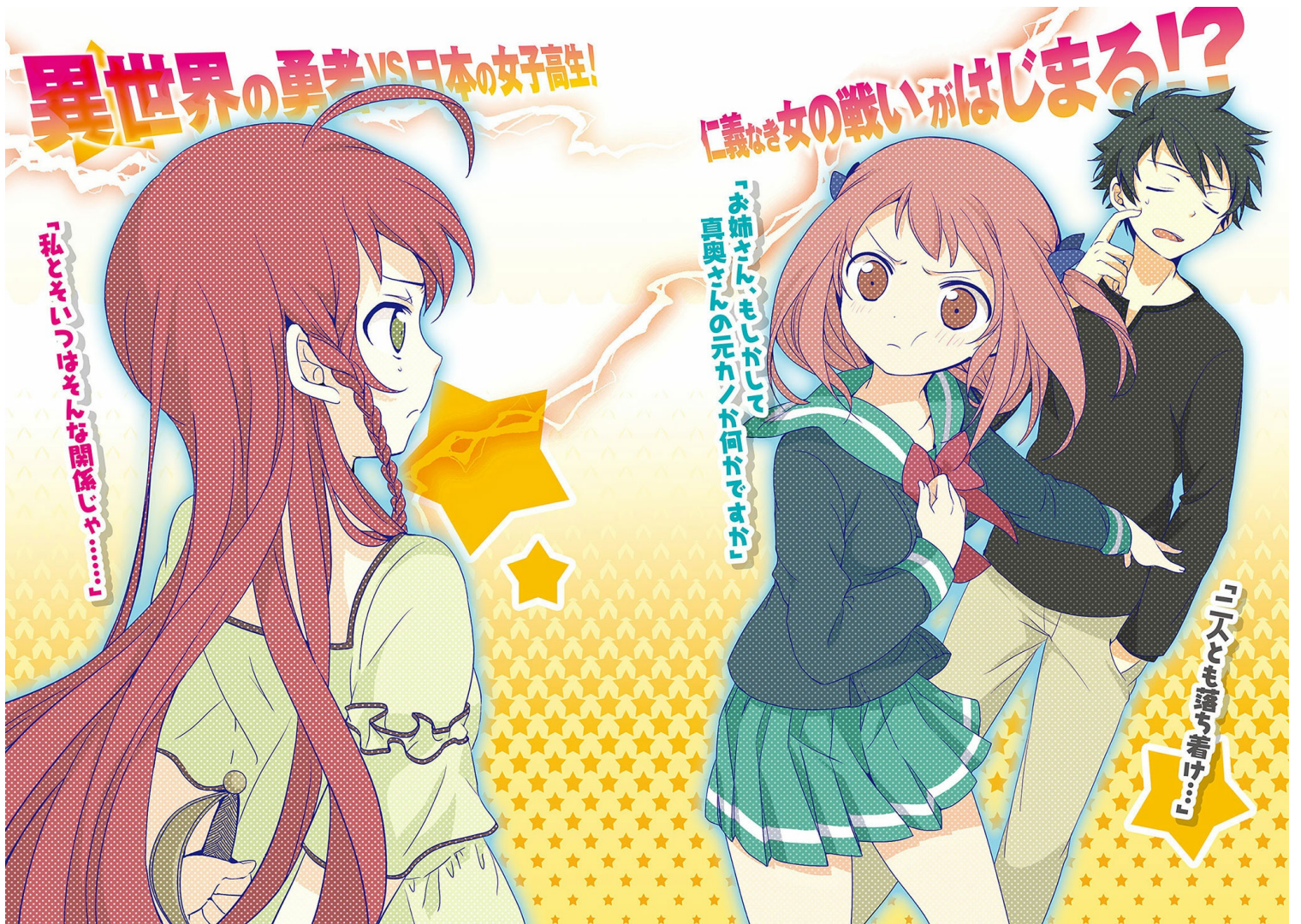
異世界の勇者VS日本の女子高生!

正義なき女の戦いはじまる!?

「私とそいつはそんな関係じゃ……!」

「お姉さん、もしかして
真奥さんの元カノが何かですか!」

「二人とも落ち着け……!」





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和ヶ原聡司
イラスト ■ 029

はたらく魔界



If you have any questions regarding the translations, or if you want to meet people from the HataMaou community, please visit our Discord Server by clicking on the picture above

**Translated by Nigel
Edited by Aardvark and Ice Phantom
EPUB by **sw**hp**

CHAPTER 1

THE DEMON KING WORKS FOR A LIVING

魔王、生活のために労働に悩む



There were no more savings in the bank.

The reason for that was simple enough– it was because they had all been used up.

But where had the money gone? The first expenditure had been on a much-awaited refrigerator. Summer was coming, and preserving food was a concern. Therefore, a refrigerator was an essential item.

Next was a bicycle. While it was a city bicycle which did not even have a gear shift, it was more than adequate as a commuting tool to get to and from part-time jobs.

After that was a washing machine. The original plan was to use coin-operated laundromats, but that turned out to be unexpectedly troublesome and time-consuming. It would be best to get a washer before summer came.

Once all that had been paid for, they had precious little savings left.

“Could you please plan your expenditures a little better?”

There seemed to be an undercurrent of reproach in those words.

“So you’re saying that you don’t mind me getting a stomachache from eating something bad, then?! Do you want me to just bear with that?”

“That’s not what I meant!”

That calm voice sounded a little defeated.

“We don’t have much money left in our account, but you’ve been turning in a good performance at your part-time job. That means you can count on being paid next month, so why not pay by installments?”

“I hate taking loans!”

“Look...”

“Besides, you have to pay administrative charges for installment plans, right? I don’t want to spend money on things that aren’t real!”

“But...”

“We shouldn’t spend beyond our means. I hate taking loans. If we don’t have the money, we won’t buy it. That’s why I’ll only pay in cash when buying things.”

This was a six tatami Japanese apartment^{|1|}, of the kind one could find anywhere. A pair of men sat at the center of the living room, looking wearily at each other over a battered kotatsu.

One of them was a young adult, who was lecturing another young adult.

The giver of the lecture was a tall and slender man. He slowly rose to his feet, and placed his hand on the door of the fridge which had become the topic of their discussion.

“Then, please enlighten me, Demon King-sama^{|2|}.”

The tall young man addressed the black-haired youth of average height as “Demon King”. He opened the refrigerator, keeping his eyes trained on this “Demon King”, and his razor-sharp gaze seemed to stare right through him.

“Please tell me; how exactly are we going to survive on konnyaku, pickles, and milk until your next payday?”

“Ah... you see...”

The words caught in the throat of the young man with the name of “Demon King”.

“It, it’s not like we’re completely out of money, I still have a bit left in my wallet...”

The look in the tall youth’s eyes seemed to say that it was not a solution.

“Well, ah, we could also have takeout from my workplace...”

“So we’re basically going to live like Super-Size Me^{|3|} until you get paid? Is that even healthy?”

The government-mandated trash bin beside the refrigerator was stuffed full of wrappers from a certain fast food chain.

“This body of mine is still young!”

“And so you’re going to stuff yourself with high-calorie, high cholesterol food while you’re still young, then. Oh, I’d like to see how you’d look in ten years’ time. Take care that you don’t die of some lifestyle disease before you go back.”

He kept needling the other man.

“Time is a different matter for us now. Even a brief period of ten years is a long time for human beings. Keeping yourself healthy isn’t easy either. Have you thought about that?”

“Shut up! I haven’t! I have never thought about it! Are you happy now? Ahhhh– what a pain! Plus, it wasn’t just my fault that things ended up like this!”

“My deepest apologies. Indeed, the blame for that can be ascribed to my incompetence. However, during this period of hardship that you are enduring to make yourself great again, you are the symbol that leads us, Maou-sama. Does that not mean that you should apply yourself, take care of your health, and thus serve as a shining example for us?”

In response to that, the Demon King lowered his head in silence. He seemed to be reflecting on his actions.

“It’s time for work!”

And then, he practically flew out of the room. So swift was the Demon King that even the young man standing in the kitchen was momentarily stunned.

“Please, please wait, Maou-sama! I’m not finished yet-”

“Shut up! Alciel, save the lecture for when I get back!”

Before the young man could catch up, the door slammed in his face, almost smashing his nose.

“Demon King-sama!”

Just as the young man called Alciel shouted at the door, it opened of its own accord. Outside, Maou stuck a hand out while staring at him.

“It’s raining! Umbrella!”

A glance outside revealed that the sky, which had been clear all morning, was now covered in thick, dark clouds. It looked like it was about to rain. Unable to dispute that convincing evidence, Alciel immediately reached for the broken-down old vinyl umbrella leaning by the door’s threshold.

“Thanks! See you later!”

The door closed once more, and there was a *kan kan kan* of footsteps racing down the stairs outside.

“Onwards, my beloved steed Dullahan-go **|4|**!”

The young man called Maou was dressed from head to toe in clothing that was instantly recognizable as coming from UNIXLO **|5|**. He mounted his newly-bought bike, gallantly rang his bell, and raised his beat-up umbrella, looking for all the world like a knight with a lance as he swiftly rode down the alley before his apartment.

Alciel, who had just delivered his lecture, was similarly clad in UNIXLO attire. He poked his head out over the railing of the apartment and stared for a good long while before sighing deeply.

Then, he turned back to the apartment door, which had “MAOU” written on the nameplate. He entered, locked the door behind him, and then sighed once more while shaking his head.

How had things ended up like this?

The interior of the apartment was gloomy from the clouds and rain outside, which reflected his emotional state at the moment.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang softly within the apartment. Yes, it was the doorbell– this apartment was not built with an intercom.

Ashiya opened the door again and said:

“...We don’t have a TV.”

Both he and the MHK bill collector he was speaking to were abundantly aware that there was no television set in this apartment. While Maou, the head of the family, felt that it would be enough to have one of those digital television phones that were all the rage nowadays, the fact was that they did not have the spare cash to actually purchase a top of the line phone.

“I’m just making a door-to-door. If you should end up purchasing a TV, please bring this payment form to the bank to pay your bills.”

The bill collector handed Ashiya a plain envelope that seemed to contain something of a business-like nature, and left without so much as a polite smile.

Even in the wide world of Ente Isla, there was nobody who did not know the name of the Demon King Satan. He presided over a Demon Realm rife with monsters, and his name was synonymous with terror and cruelty.

His ambition was to invade the world defended by the gods– the Continent of the Holy Cross, known as Ente Isla. He would conquer the world of mankind, and build a paradise for the monsters of darkness.

What drove humanity to despair was the knowledge that this unimaginably powerful Demon King commanded four Archdemons, each of whom possessed abilities that rivalled his own.

The four of them were Alciel, Lucifer, Adrammelech, and

Malacoda.

At the heart of the Ignora Ocean was a central continent, bordered on the north, south, east, and west by the cross-shaped lands of Ente Isla. Alciel, Lucifer, Adrammelech, and Malacoda each led detachments of the Demon Army to the continents of the east, west, north, and south respectively, in order to claim them for the Demon King. Soon, they were on the verge of annihilating mankind, who made up the bulk of the gods' followers.

However, an anomaly occurred with the army of Lucifer to the west.

Apparently, his entire army had been routed by just a single human.

The human who destroyed Lucifer's army was known as the Hero, who led several survivors in a counterattack.

Lucifer was an angel who had fallen from Heaven.

The Theocracy– which was closest to Heaven– was a major power in the west. Thus, it only made sense to have Lucifer– who was most familiar with the affairs of Heaven– deal with their forces, which drew upon Heaven's powers. However, that plan was undone by the human known as the Hero.

It was natural for there to be one or two surprises in an extended campaign. The Demon King underestimated the Hero's power and wrote it off as bad luck on Lucifer's part. He believed that the power of the other Archdemons would be enough to easily defeat the Hero.

That was the beginning of his mistake.

Satan had always thought of humans as beings who were little more than ants.

However, when one thought about it, there was no way to completely wipe ants out. A tiny, venomous insect was beneath the notice of a mighty lion, but could the former not fell the latter with a single bite?

Within the same year, Lucifer's defeat was swiftly followed by that of Adrammelech and Malacoda. Alciel, wisest of the four Archdemons and their strategist, suggested that they abandon the eastern continent and fall back to the headquarters of the Demon King's army– the central continent– to mount a defense. The long conquest of Ente Isla had been overturned in a single year, and even Satan himself could no longer view the situation in an optimistic light.

Led by the Hero and the Theocracy, a revitalized mankind gathered mighty forces from parts unknown and launched an invasion on the Demon King's domain– the central continent of Ente Isla.

In the blink of an eye, the central continent was in dire straits. The Demon King's army had been routed because he had underestimated the human known as the Hero.

Satan and Alciel met the attack of the Hero and the Hero's three companions.

Even the Hero and company had difficulty battling the Demon King and his Archdemon adjutant at the same time. However, the Hero was still stronger than Satan and Alciel.

In the end, the Hero's holy sword struck off one of Satan's horns, and Alciel finally decided to suggest the idea of retreat to the Demon King. If this kept up, they might not just end up defeated, but dead.

Satan reluctantly agreed with Alciel's suggestion and decided to flee Ente Isla. His plan was to flee to another world, rebuild his strength, and then make his return.

By the merest of margins, Satan escaped through a Gate before the holy sword could pierce his heart. However, not even the frustrated look on the Hero's face was any comfort to him.

With a roar that resounded through the heavens, Satan addressed all of Ente Isla:

“Humans! I shall leave Ente Isla to you for now. But the day will come when I return to claim it for myself with these two hands!”

Properly operating a Gate to another world required a considerable amount of demonic magic. Satan and Alciel were unable to do so, given their hard-fought battle against the Hero.

The two of them passed through the Gate, drifting along the flow of space-time until they reached a nation which astounded them with its technological advancement.

Satan and Alciel were confronted with sights they had never seen before— tall buildings whose height exceeded a demon’s comprehension, and a mysterious power which lit up the night with countless sparkling lights.

The two of them appeared to be in a dingy little alley within a large city of some sort. They heard distant, unknown sounds through the gaps between vast buildings. What intelligent beings ruled this place? What savage beasts existed here? The two of them decided that their priority was to find a place where they would not be discovered while healing their wounds.

Suddenly, a beam of piercing light illuminated them.

“What are the two of you doing over there?!”

It was a man’s voice, speaking in a language that was ordered enough that Satan could understand it. At a closer look, it looked like a humanoid lifeform similar to those which covered the entire continent of Ente Isla. He held a cylindrical object in his hand, which was the source of the light.

“Is anyone hurt? Was there a fight?”

It would seem the world they currently inhabited was ruled by a human civilization. There was another man standing behind the first man. The former was dressed like the latter, and he was looking over at them as well.

In order to ward off any potential trouble, Alciel shouted at them

in a threatening tone:

“Show some respect! Gaze upon the mighty being before you!”

However, for some reason the men did not respond. In fact, they even wrinkled their brows in bafflement.

That shocked Satan and Alciel to the core. Even the words which demons spoke were imbued with demonic magic. Logically speaking, no human being should be able to endure them so casually.

“Achya~ it’s foreigners, this is going to be troublesome..”

The man who had first discovered them seemed confused, and then he took out a black, box-like object and began talking to himself.

“This is Sergeant Sasaki. I’ve got a light injury case here. Suspects are Asiatic foreigners, location is...”

Their clothing looked quite sturdy, but it did not seem to be made of cloth or hide. On their waists, they had weapons which looked like dagger hilts. Their hats seemed to be decorated with some form of golden badge which was shaped like plant-life. They were probably knights of some kingdom in this world.

The man seemed to be babbling to himself, but he was probably communicating with distant comrades through some means. If they really were knights, and they were calling for aid, things would be very grim for Satan and Alciel, who were already wounded.

There were only two of them now, and they were not on their guard. Alciel decided to eliminate the witnesses, and to that end he planned to gather his remaining demonic magic into bolts with which to attack them. However—

“What...”

The demonic magic did not gather as he had expected. In fact, the more he tried to hold onto it, the more it leaked from his body, in an

unstoppable flow. Just as Alciel was about to report this fact to the Demon King...

“Ma-Maou-sama, you-your appearance...!”

Alciel’s voice was filled with unease. Before his eyes was the King of the Demon World, clearly illuminated by the beam of light.

“Alciel, don’t use demonic magic before we’ve got a grasp on this world.”

The Demon King appeared to be calm, but the fact was that he was also gritting his teeth in worry.

His body was still covered in the wounds of battle, but the Demon King Satan now had the form of a weak lifeform– in other words, a human being.

“Well, the squad car’s coming soon, lads. So just behave yourselves and we’ll have you on your way home soon, okay?”

The men did not seem to be afraid of Satan and Alciel at all. Before he could recover from his shock, Alciel thrust his hands before himself. They were something he had never seen before– a pair of human hands.

Eventually, a horseless carriage drew up. It was clearly painted in black and white, with flashing red lights on top. Several other men dressed in the same uniform as the ones who had found them stepped out, and they ushered Satan and Alciel into the vehicle.

“Do you speak Japanese? Don’t you find it hot to wear these in summer?”

The man who had first found the pair kept talking. The two archfiends– who had once boasted powerful bodies which were far superior to those of ordinary humans– were now in the form of those same humans. It felt utterly unnatural, like they had become toddlers swaddled in bedsheets. The dignified vestments of kings and generals which they wore looked entirely out of place on them.

Satan and Alciel looked at each other, but they had no idea how to answer. Even if they did want to respond, the other party probably would not be able to understand them.

“...Haaa. Still, there’s a lot of young people in interesting costumes out there.”

The man seemed to have jumped to his own conclusion as he continued babbling to himself.

Eventually, Satan and Alciel were brought to a building known as a “police station”, which was apparently a gathering place for the guards of this world.

That said, the Demon King Satan was a cut above Alciel. Once he was brought to a room to have his statement taken, he cast a hypnosis spell on the officer responsible and began asking him about information pertaining to this world. As he had expected, humans in every world were the same. The nobles and officers who swaggered about in their fortresses had much weaker wills than the average battle-hardened soldier.

According to the hypnotized police officer, the two of them had drifted to a world called “Earth”, and this was an island nation called “Japan”. The capital of “Japan” was called “Tokyo”, and a transportation network called the “Metro” ran beneath it. One of its nodes was nearby, called “Harajuku Station”.

Within the popular consciousness of this nation, concepts like magic, demonic magic, Demon Kings and demons were the product of fantasy, and they did not exist in the real world. Demonic magic should have been the product of the world’s inhabitants, spreading throughout the world like air. Yet, it did not exist here, which meant that he could not restore his reserves.

“In other words, I... don’t have any more demonic magic?”

Alciel slumped to the ground, unable to bear that shocking revelation.

“Ah, but Maou-sama, you...”

“I have a little strength left over. That said, just keeping it from slipping away is very taxing.”

The Demon King could store far more demonic magic within his body than other demons. While he had used much of it in his battle against the Hero, it was still several times greater than the amount Alciel possessed. That was why Satan had enough power left to employ a hypnosis spell.

“As long as I adjust the output, I probably won’t use it all up at once. However...”

The problem was that once it was used up, there was no way to recover it.

His wounds would eventually mend someday, but if this kept up, he would never be able to recover his reserves of demonic magic. In that case, they would not be able to operate the Gate as they intended. If that happened, they might not even make it back to Ente Isla, but wind up on another, even more dangerous world instead.

Therefore, it would be better to look for some way around that in this world, rather than pinning all their hopes onto a single, rash gamble.

This world did not recognize the concepts of demons or magic, but the concepts of gods or exorcisms were equally feeble. While there seemed to be exorcism rituals and the like, they had become little more than ceremonial in nature, so there should not be anyone here who could draw divine power from those rituals.

For the time being, they could probably avoid being hunted as monsters if they stayed in this land called “Japan”. After the investigating officer took their statements and concluded that there were no problems, the two of them left the police station.

Satan and Alciel discussed their future plans in an unlit alley.

First, they had to find a way to store demonic magic in this world, which meant that they would have to prepare themselves to stay in this world for a long while.

The fact that they could not store demonic magic was more dire than just the inability to use magic. It was a matter of life and death for these two demons.

High-class demons did not need to eat because they could directly convert demonic magic into the energy needed to live. To them, a world without demonic magic was essentially a world without food.

In that case, why did some demons eat? That was because they could draw energy from food, like regular lifeforms.

They would need to eat if they wanted to live in a world where they could not replenish their demonic magic. Japan was a capitalistic society, so they needed money in order to eat.

Of course, neither of them possessed any currency from this world.

“Alciel, I’d like to check something with you. If you had to take on the cops from just now, could you get rid of them?”

In response to that question, Alciel shook his head with a deeply pained expression on his face. Maou nodded to show that he understood.

These two archfiends, who had once ruled over all mankind, were now in a state where they lacked the power to even scare off a few humans.

Worse still, it was not because the humans of this world were strong, but it was because they had lost so much of their strength. It was a testament to the intensity of their battle with the Hero.

“That means that we’ve ended up like this because...”

Alciel looked at his hands and frowned, as though they were some kind of hideous monstrosity. He looked at his soft and thin skin, his

well-proportioned yet lifeless face, topped by a head of messy hair, those round nails which seemed utterly unreliable, and the weak muscles of his body.

“How sad. Now that I’m out of demonic magic, I can’t even look like a proper demon.”

Demons’ appearances corresponded to their power. Their demonic magic sustained their forms, supplying claws that could rend their foes, legs which could leap over walls, wings that carried them through the sky, hair which writhed like snakes, and so on.

“To think we would end up looking like this after stripping off all the those trappings. Perhaps humanity lies at the base of all living things...”

“Please do not joke like that. I dread to think of the fact that our bodies are based on those of humans. This must be a side-effect of passing through this Gate or entering this world.”

“...Eh, in any case, that’s not what we should be worrying about.”

Not only did they lack the power to open a Gate, they even lacked the power to surpass humanity. If they wanted to continue living, they would have to do so in this country, and by obeying the laws of mankind.

To the Demon King and the demon general, playing by humanity’s rules was essentially trampling their pride.

However, before them lay the cruel reality that if they did not work, they would not be able to eat.

Drawing their robes tight around their bodies, the Demon King and the Archdemon took an uneasy first step into an unknown world.

According to what they had learned from the policemen, it would seem they needed a “household registry” and an “address” to live in

Japan. Without either of these, they would not even be able to find a job with which to earn money.

“Household registries” and “addresses” could only be obtained from the “district office”. Therefore, their first objective was the “district office”. With great difficulty, the two of them dragged their wounded bodies to the “Shibuya District Office”, which was the closest one to the Harajuku Police Station, only to find that they would have to wait for it to open tomorrow morning.

Satan and Alciel were forced to spend the night in front of the district office, hugging their knees in a miserable state.

The streets that were lit 24 hours a day only grew livelier when the dawn came. Among the huge variety of clothing which adorned the people that poured onto the streets were a sizable fraction of males dressed in black and navy-blue clothing. When they began showing up, the Shibuya District Office finally opened for business. At that moment, Satan and Alciel immediately ran to the front of the line, using hypnosis on the receptionist– who had been startled by their bizarre getup– and thus they successfully obtained a “household registry form”.

Their next objective was a “housing agency”, a place which could supply a place for them to stay.

Back on Ente Isla, Satan and Alciel had learned the language of humanity in three days. They were determined to use their practical experience to master “Japanese” in a similar fashion.

In the end, the worker at the housing agency took one look at their mangled Japanese and their strange clothing and mistook them for foreigners. As a result, they received a thorough and gentle schooling in the local culture.

Satan told the kind-hearted worker that they could not afford to rent a place which was too expensive.

While a single use of hypnosis magic would not consume too much demonic magic, they would be chased out of their home if

they could not pay the rent. Thus, if they lived in a place which was too expensive, yet lacked a matching source of income, they would need to constantly use hypnosis spells on the landlord. After they told the worker that they only needed the bare minimum of living facilities in order to cut down on the rent, the man's face turned sour, and he indicated a location.

“The landlord of this place is a very... unique individual.”

The location in question was a street called “Sasazuka” in the Shibuya District, and the residence was a room in an apartment block.

The rent was 45,000 yen, with no cash deposit or guarantor required. It was a 60-year old place that was six tatamis in size. It was not equipped with a bathroom, but it did have a toilet.

It was Apartment 201 of the “Villarosa Sasazuka”.

“The landlord of this place said that suspicious people like yourselves with no family background or the like have priority for residence here.”

Being referred to as such rankled Satan and Alciel, but they had no other options, so all they could do was stay there.

Together, they took a “company car” (apparently that was what those transportation tools were called) to a two-story apartment building in a quiet district. The walls were mottled with applications of concrete, while there were many tiles missing from the roof. The roof drains were heavily rusted, and even the stairs leading to the second floor were twisted. They could not sense any residents within this place— in all likelihood, the apartments here were all empty.

“This, this apartment...” Alciel groaned.

“Ah, mm. Even I can tell.”

The two of them conversed in the demonic tongue. Even though the two of them did not quite understand this world, it was readily

apparent that this was a broken-down old building.

They had once occupied the pinnacle of demonic society, as Demon King and Archdemon. Even if they were in exile, they could not possibly bed down in such a beat-up place. More to the point, all these rooms were empty. Did that not imply that even the residents of this world had rejected this place?

In any case, they could not stay here. Just as they were about to turn around and say as much to the young man from the housing agency who was standing behind them, they found that he was not there.

“...Is that... human?”

It was a mysterious lifeform with a bizarre appearance. Even the two demons could only describe it as “monstrous”. Alciel was already quite tall by human standards, but the other party was easily as tall as him, with a body that exceeded the definition of the word “prosperous”. The two of them were forced to acknowledge that the creature before them was female.

Its bushy hair was piled to the sky and dyed a purplish silver. Upon it sat a brightly-colored hydrangea-shaped headdress. It wore a light purple shawl over a shocking purple summer dress, and each of its fingers had an amethyst ring on it. Its feet were encased in bright purple enamelled high heels. Its violet lipgloss matched its lilac eyeshadow, while its thick, pure white foundation looked like it would crack at the slightest touch and made its rouged cheeks stand out even more. It resembled a gigantic, peeled, purple sweet potato.

“Greetings, gentlemen. Are you two the guests who wish to rent a room here?”

“It, spoke!”

The words slipped reflexively from Alciel’s mouth, a clear sign that her formidable presence had utterly crushed the two of them.

“I am the owner of the Villarosa Sasazuka, Shiba Miki.”

It was only then that the petrified Satan and Alciel noticed the housing agent driving off in the distance, behind this purple object.

“Miki is spelled with the ‘Mi’ as in ‘beautiful’ and the ‘ki’ as in ‘brilliant’. Ah, but you can call me ‘Mikitty’.”

The two of them had mastered Japanese to some extent, but they still had no idea what this mysterious landlady called “Shiba” was going on about.

We can't get involved with her. The two of them were clearly thinking that, yet they had somehow been dragged into one of the rooms in the run-down apartment, signed all manner of forms, and ended up listening to a lecture about the apartment facilities.

“Then, the two of you will be staying here from this day forth. I will be staying in the neighboring apartment. Feel free to look me up anytime if you're unsure about anything. That being the case, let's leave things here for today.”

After the purple hurricane departed, all that remained in the apartment were the speechless Satan and Alciel, as well as the rent agreement form, signed with a purple lip-print.

Naturally, Satan and Alciel had signed the agreement as well. After a while, they recovered from their shock and began calmly contemplating the situation.

This apartment looked pretty shabby from the outside and the landlady was inhumanly frightening, but there was probably nowhere else around here who would take in two very suspicious-looking young men with no previous address and no jobs. At the very least, they now had a place to lay their heads without having to sleep on the streets.

The two of them silently vowed to live within the rules as much as possible and to pay their rent on time, all in order to have as little contact with the landlady as possible.

“It seems there's a saying in this world called “sleeping on sticks

and tasting gall.” Staying in this place ought to be quite interesting.”|6|

Satan was experiencing exhaustion the likes of which he had never felt before. He had been wounded in his battle against the Hero and had been drained by the flow of space-time when travelling through the Gate. He had been subjected to tremendous mental stress when coming to an unknown world, and his demonic magic had been so depleted that a mere two hypnosis spells had almost left him gasping for breath.

In order to revitalize his fatigued body and soul, the Demon King Satan proceeded to sleep for a full three days and three nights.

He did not eat or drink during those three days and nights of slumber. That—combined with his wounds—resulted in Satan being hospitalized for malnutrition, where he was bedridden due to dehydration and a lack of vitamins.

Alciel had no choice but to beg the landlady Shiba for help after three days, because he knew nothing about the medical services of this world. After all, his master was on the verge of death. His face was pale, his eyes were lifeless, and his skin was beginning to dry up from a lack of water.

Shiba used a long-range communication device called a “telephone” to summon a bright white vehicle with flashing red lights, called an “ambulance”.

As Alciel saw his master lying on a hospital bed and hooked up to an intravenous drop, Alciel finally realized that the Demon King and himself were not only human in appearance, but in physiology. The revelation made him weep tears of shame.

Yet, no matter how much Alciel lamented, reality was cruel.

Medical fees in this world were very expensive. While there seemed to be some sort of public insurance program which defrayed the costs of personal medical expenses, Satan and Alciel

were naturally not part of it.

Even Alciel– who did not know the value of this world’s currency– could not help but think that they were being ripped off after they saw the hospital bills. Satan, who had barely been discharged, was forced to use hypnosis again to get out of paying the treatment fees.

In any event, they needed money, and they needed to obtain it in a way which did not result in them getting in trouble with the police or wasting demonic magic.

They had to enroll in the national health insurance scheme.

Having decided to use the hypnosis spell a final time, the two of them proceeded to a bank, where they arranged to open an account and obtain the necessary funds. After hypnotizing one of the tellers, they obtained 10,000 yen, with which they opened an ordinary savings account.

This was clearly an illegal act, but they were demons. If they hesitated over something as measly as theft, then they were hardly worthy of the name.

And so– while they suppressed the feeling in their hearts that they had gotten something wrong– they obtained the funds needed to live.

Apparently, a paying job required a “CV form”, and so they used the 10,000 yen to buy the food they needed and the CV forms in question.

It would seem that after filling in the necessary fields on the forms and sending them to an appropriate place, they would have to sit for an “interview”. Depending on the response to the interview, they would be able to work.

However, Satan and Alciel had no special skills that were applicable in this world. Naturally, they could not write “Work Experience: King of the Demon Realm, Special Talents/Hobbies: World Domination” on their resumes. Therefore, they had no choice

but to set their sights on jobs which advertised themselves as “no experience required.”

The two of them filled up quite a number of CVs.

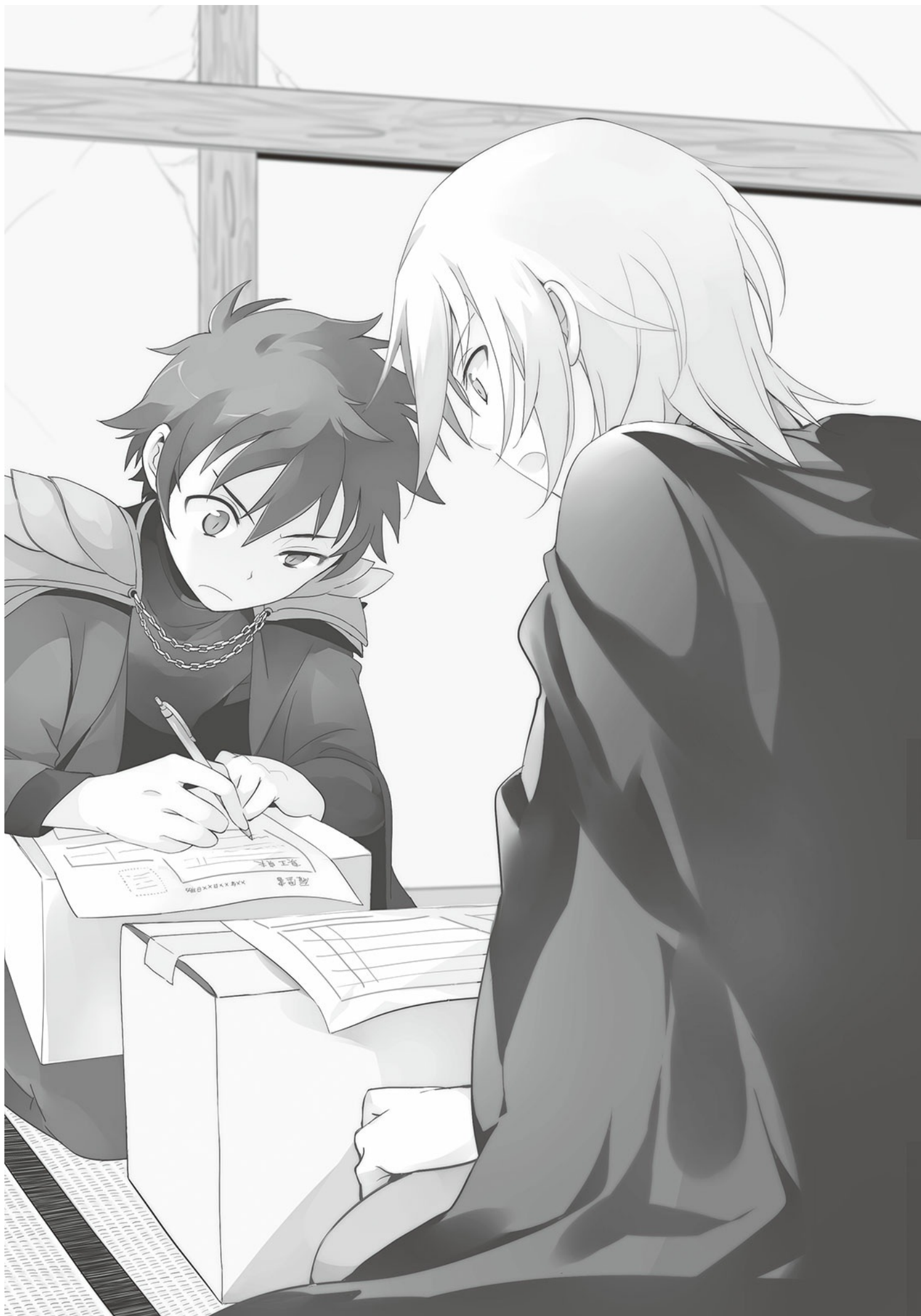
Swallowing their distaste and shame, dreaming of someday defeating the Hero and reclaiming Ente Isla, they forcefully wrote their names down.

“Name: Maou Sadao... alright.”

“Name: Ashiya Shiro. Don’t these names sound weird?”

“Forget it. Besides, we’re registered under those names, aren’t we?”

And so, they converted the six-tatami apartment of Villarosa Sasazuka 201 into an interim Demon King’s Castle. Under the names of Maou Sadao and Ashiya Shiro, the Demon King Satan and the Archdemon Alciel rekindled their ambition to conquer Ente Isla.



While the two of them had obtained jobs and thus secured a way to keep themselves alive, they could not grow complacent and relax. They needed more money for essentials like electricity, water, and gas.

As Satan recalled how he had effortlessly controlled lightning, waves, and fire in the past, he could not help but weep.

Satan and Alciel, now called Sadao and Ashiya, were little more than NEETs in their 20s.

After browsing countless help-wanted ads, the Demon King and his general found several jobs which paid a daily wage.

All they had to do was register with the indicated companies and those companies would help find short-term work for them. They paid between 5,000 to 10,000 yen a day, and they did so on the spot. In addition, the job description suggested that there was a possibility of a raise.

They used their scant few 10 yen coins to make some calls on a public phone, and arranged for an interview date.

When they reached the Shinjuku branch office, they realized that it was less of an interview than a briefing on what sort of jobs they might be doing. The two of them finished registering on the spot and began taking assignments on the day itself.

The two of them were inexperienced rookies, so they were given simple jobs like “helping to set up an activity venue”. After they finished the day’s work, they received their prearranged wage.

Satan was convinced by the daily wage of 7,000 yen offered by the company.

As long as they could go on like this, their living expenses would not be a problem for the time being. Once they had saved up enough, they could start looking for more permanent work.

However, that plan fell apart in a mere two weeks.

All the full-time staff could recognize their faces from their daily work.

The company was shut down by the government, and they were ordered to cease all human resource operations. This unexpected setback came like a bolt from the blue for them.

Suddenly unemployed, the two of them could only walk home depressed, listening to the news from the TVs which lined the streets.

All the news reports were railing against a certain company which had engaged in profiteering and illegal recruitment.

Why did two proud demons have to lose their jobs because of the rules laid down by a bunch of mere humans?

As Satan watched the roadside TVs with hatred in his eyes, he finally realized something.

“Hold on, Ashiya.”

“Please call me Alciel.”

“Our primary objective is to conquer the human world, not make a pitiful wage to survive day by day!”

“Indeed, that is so.”

“How about this. Since my stamina and demonic magic are superior to yours, I’ll handle the work while you focus on a way to recover our demonic magic. I have known you to be a wise strategist, and I am certain you will find a way to obtain demonic magic in Japan.”

“Maou-sama...”

“That’s Demon King-sama to you. In any case, two people working together might make it easier to earn money, but we can’t lose sight of the forest for the trees. There must be some basis to the concepts of the Demon King and demonic magic in this world. If we can find

the source of those concepts, we might have a solution.”

“A way to... recover demonic magic?”

Satan nodded gravely.

“That ought to be better than the two of us looking for work. If we can not only restore our demonic magic but obtain a new power source in this world, we ought to be able to return to Ente Isla, am I wrong?”

Ashiya– no, Alciel– was so moved by that long-awaited proclamation from the Demon King that he genuflected before him.

“Understood, Demon King-sama. I swear upon my life that I shall find a way back to Ente Isla, and a way for you to recover your demonic magic!”

“...Oi, get up, Alciel. This is a sidewalk, you’re being very embarrassing!”

The pedestrians stared coldly at Alciel– who had suddenly fallen to his knees and started shouting– before moving off.

The Demon King Satan had become the Japanese man Maou Sadao, and he was frantically trying to make money. He did all sorts of odd jobs, from road work to traffic control, product sorting, being an assistant at a moving agency, and even helping out at a train station during peak hours.

In order to maintain the Demon King’s health and allow him to focus on his work, Alciel– in the capacity of Ashiya Shiro– took care of the housework and used his spare time to investigate demonic magic and such, as well as managing the household finances with an iron hand.

About half a year after the two of them had come to Japan, Maou managed to secure a part-time position at a big fast food chain– MgRonald’s.

On the first day of work, Maou returned joyfully with a sack of employee meals. He even went so far as to say, “Now we won’t have to worry about food any more!”

At first, Ashiya had also been happy that their food problems were solved. However, he soon grew tired of eating burgers, fries, fried chicken, and other such rich and high-calorie food. After a week had passed, his stomach was so upset that he did not want to see them again.

In contrast, Maou seemed quite happy with the taste, and was content to eat those things every day.

In the end, Ashiya had to begin preparing food every day. Because of that, there was hardly any progress on the matter of demonic magic recovery. In order to avoid having to eat junk food for all three meals of the day, Ashiya had no choice but to rush into the supermarket just before it closed and hunt for bargains.

Perhaps it was because Maou received good appraisals while at work, but his hourly wage went up within a mere two months.

Ashiya could not forget that day, when the Demon King was over the moon because his hourly pay had gone up by a mere 100 yen.

Maou steadily climbed the ranks thereafter, and now he had become an A-class crew member of the MgRonald’s branch at Hatagaya Station.

His hourly wage was now 200 yen higher than when he had first joined half a year ago, which was apparently unprecedented treatment. Ashiya would have noticed a decrease in his demonic magic if he had used hypnosis, so in all likelihood he had earned those results through hard work.

In addition, a customer had apparently sent feedback to the MgRonald’s home office, overflowing with praise for Maou’s service attitude, and as a result he received that month’s MVP award.

It was hard to believe that someone who aimed to conquer the

world would say things like, “Ah, my boss has good taste,” “The new kouhai is really good,” and so on. In the end, Maou even said, “The first step in world domination is to surpass the store leader.”

It would seem that Maou’s ambition as a Demon King was shrinking by the day.

Ashiya’s identity was bound up in supporting the conquests of Maou– no, the Demon King. He had been so worried about his master recently that he had slowly lost his sense of direction for the future.

Ashiya tucked away the MHK bill without opening it. As a loyal subordinate of the Demon King, he buried his unease and dissatisfaction within his heart, and set out for the Tokyo art galleries and museums as he always did.

After conducting his investigations, he was certain that there were places on Earth where demonic magic existed– or at least, where it had once existed.

Stonehenge in the UK, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Nazca Lines of Peru– these were all structures which people believed were made by magic.

This was all the fruit of Ashiya’s labor, spent in careful examination of the library’s collection of ruins around the globe. Naturally, the Demon King’s Castle where Maou and Ashiya lived could not possibly have Internet access.

However, he had no idea how to tell which of those was correct.

They had no funds with which to leave the country, and even if they could use the Demon King’s hypnosis magic to do so, there was no guarantee that their destination contained demonic magic.

If they guessed poorly, the consequences would be disastrous. In addition, there might not be even be enough demonic magic left there to allow the Demon King to recover.

Therefore, Ashiya decided to investigate the historical relics around them instead.

The museums and art galleries regularly exhibited items borrowed from overseas museums. His plan was to look for relics among them which emanated traces of demonic magic.

His objective today was a special exhibition held at Ueno's National Museum of Western Art. The first step towards that was to head toward Shinjuku.

Since it was raining outside, he took up the plastic umbrella which Maou had picked up from the street. There was nothing worth stealing, but he still fastened the unreliable-looking padlock before leaving.

Ashiya suddenly thought, *are these days going to continue forever?*

It was still spring, but those dreadful thoughts made him shudder all over.

“Hm?”

Therefore, he was a moment late in realizing that the ground actually *was* shaking.

It was an earthquake.

After spending a year in Japan, he now knew that it was an earthquake-prone nation. Thus, he did not panic. However, after living for so long in this ancient, rickety apartment block, his sensitivity to vibrations had tripled, which annoyed him.

As expected, the shaking stopped after about ten seconds. In Ente Isla, mankind panicked over earthquakes of any size, viewing them as the gods' wrath or an invasion by the Demon King's army. In Japan, however, nobody minded shaking of this magnitude, and the trains did not stop.

Ashiya was headed to Shinjuku, but he did not take the train. It was only one stop from Sasazuka to Shinjuku via the Keio Line, and

as a man, he would only need 20 minutes to walk that far. He tried the doorknob again to make sure it was locked, then put the key into his pocket and slowly descended the communal stairs.

However, Ashiya did not notice that he was delighted at having saved the travel expenses of a single train stop.

Maou Sadao rode his beloved steed Dullahan-go to his workplace.

If traffic was smooth, the journey from the Demon King's Castle in Sasazuka to the Hatagaya branch of McGonald's would take less than 10 minutes. However, he had been delayed by Ashiya's nagging, and the rain had grown heavier.

It was so heavy that his beat-up umbrella, with its twisted ribs, rusted spine, and clouded-over plastic, could no longer withstand it.

Still, Maou continued pedalling forward with all his might.

Today was the last day of the month, and it was a Friday to boot. The sense of liberation at the upcoming day off would surely inspire consumers to spend more, and at the same time it would determine whether or not they would top the region for sales. Maou psyched himself up– today, he would make sure he set a new record for the sales of black pepper fries!

“I'd still be thinking about it, even if Ashiya didn't bring it up!!”

He still held onto his ambition to conquer Ente Isla. However, if he could not go back, then it could not be helped. Even if he did go back, without demonic magic he would be immediately hunted down and horribly slaughtered.

From another point of view, one could say that as long as he lived his life correctly in Japan, he would not have to worry about people attacking him. He could satisfy his pride as a Demon King by thinking of today's activities as part of his efforts to someday subjugate Ente Isla.

Maou firmly believed that all would be well as long as things stayed the way they were now.

He stopped at the red light before the pedestrian crossing. The brakes emitted an ear-piercing shriek, and the front wheel slid into a puddle.

Dullahan-go had been a very worthwhile purchase, but its sole flaw was the sound it made when it braked, which called to mind the screaming of a mandrake plant.

One would encounter a cross junction after turning toward the residential district from Koushuu Boulevard. There was a small park and a fashionable restaurant with a full glass facade right after it.

A young lady stood on the pedestrian crossing under the restaurant's awning, facing the direction from which Maou had come.

Now that it was close to lunchtime, there were quite a number of people on the streets, so there was only one reason he would notice her— the fact that she did not carry an umbrella despite the rain. They were still some distance apart, but it was readily apparent that the girl was frowning and wiping her hair and shoulders with a handkerchief.

As the light turned red, she glared hatefully at the sky. She probably had not expected it to rain. As expected, once the light turned green, she stood where she was, unsure of what to do.

Maou obeyed the traffic rules and walked his bike across the pedestrian crossing. After he was done, the woman looked in his direction as though she had just noticed his arrival. He nodded politely to her, and then walked up to the girl, under the awning. In order to avoid arousing her suspicion, he stopped his bike between the two of them.

“If you don’t mind, how about using this?”

He folded up his plastic umbrella, and handed it to the girl.

“Eh?”

There was a hint of confusion in the girl’s voice, and then she looked around in bafflement.

“It looks like the sudden rain’s giving you a lot of trouble.”

When he had first seen the girl from across the street, her appearance and actions seemed very mature to him, but upon closer inspection, she looked like a high-schooler. No matter how you looked at it, she was probably younger than how Maou looked.

She was beautiful, well-suited to the floral-print tunic and denim tights that she wore. Her slightly curled long hair looked even more enchanting after it had been wetted. It would seem she had forgotten to put a folding umbrella into the handbag she carried at her shoulder.

The girl’s eyes went wide, and she stared uneasily at Maou’s face.

“But, but, is that really alright? After all, if you lend me that umbrella...”

Maou did not have a spare umbrella. He had not even bought one before. In fact, he had picked this umbrella up from the street.

“My workplace is just ahead. I’ll be there in a couple of minutes if I go faster. Besides, they’ve got umbrellas in there.”

The girl gingerly accepted the umbrella which Maou handed to her. In order to avoid further entanglement, Maou promptly mounted up on his bicycle and prepared to set off right away.

“Ah, thank you. Also, please allow me to return the favor.”

He had not expected to be stopped by the girl’s forceful tone. Maou waved and said:

“It’s fine. Besides, it’s just a beat-up old umbrella. You can throw it away once you’re done with it.”

“But how could I...”

After seeing that she was not willing to let the matter go, Maou continued:

“How about this– I work at the nearby MgRonald’s. Why not come over and grab a bite when you’re free?”

“Nearby... oh, the one in front of Hatagaya Station, then?”

The girl nodded as she looked in the direction where Maou was pointing.

“Yup. If I’m on shift, I’ll add a few more fries to your order.”

Maou’s trump card was his grassroots marketing technique. He spoke to anybody who might be a potential customer in the tone of a MgRonald’s worker, and this effort had paid off in the form of his raise.

“Got it. I’ll go there. Then...”

The girl straightened up and looked Maou in the eye.

“I thank you for the loan of your umbrella.”

After that dignified response, she bowed to Maou.

Her sunny smile seemed to blow away the dark clouds in his heart.

“Then, please take care of yourself.”

Maou waved to her to hide his embarrassment, then turned and charged into the rain without looking back.

“Uwaaaaah, it’s so cold!”

Had he been trying too hard? Still, this was all part of his efforts to conquer the world.

If he had lost the umbrella for a sensible reason, perhaps even that miser¹⁷ Alciel might give him a break and allow him to buy a new one. If not, he could always take a spare from the store.

The girl stood unmoving at the crossroads as the light turned red again, until she could no longer see Maou.

In the end, they could not hit the target of highest sales in the district. This was because one of the fryers broke during lunchtime.

It took two hours for the repairmen to arrive, and those two hours were critical to the race.

Maou was depressed, but he still brought a huge pile of junk food home that night as a gift.

Fortunately the rain had stopped by evening. While that meant that he did not need to borrow an umbrella from the store, it had still impacted their number of customers.

On the way home, all Maou could think of was how else he could do better, leaving the matter of the rain and the mechanical failure aside. He thought about that until he reached the intersection where he had lent that girl his umbrella earlier that day.

“...Eh?”

It was late at night now. The restaurant had long since closed up. Only the street lamps and the flashing lights of commuter traffic illuminated the now-empty junction.

Someone stepped out from under the awning of the restaurant.

He had not noticed earlier because it was nighttime and thus it was dark, but was that not the girl he had met while going to work?

“Hm? Aren’t you that girl from this...”

Maou stopped halfway. Something was wrong here.

The girl said nothing, but glared coldly at Maou.

She was the owner of a smile which was as bright as a rainbow after a shower, but the look on her face now was like an Arctic glacier that could freeze the very sun.

There was no doubt at all that she was staring at him. Under the weight of her gaze, Maou unconsciously gulped.

Maou had no idea why she was staring at him without making a sound, but in the end, he could not bear the heaviness in the air and decided to call out to her.

“Are you alright? Did you get soaked on the way back?”

“How could I be alright?!”

“Eh?”

Even her words were as icy as a winter night.

“I went to your store today.”

“Oh, ah... ah, thanks... thank you.”

Maou’s pitch dried up. He did not remember seeing her while he was manning the counter.

The girl took a step towards Maou, and he almost fell off his bike on account of losing his balance. He hurriedly dismounted from the bicycle and put it between them. He had done the same thing earlier that day, but now it was for an entirely different reason.

“I was observing you from the opposite store all this while.”

“Observing... observing the store?”

The building opposite his workplace should have been a bookstore. To think she had been watching the store from there all this time... could she be one of the legendary surprise inspectors sent by HQ?

“No, I was watching *you*.”

“Watching... me?”

Maou felt more and more confused. She had come to the store, but not to return the umbrella. Were there any women he knew who would go that far just to catch a glimpse of his face?

“...You looked so different that I thought I’d gotten the wrong

person. But soon enough, I discovered it.”

There was only–

“I knew you were in the vicinity, but I wondered if I was mistaken...”

–One person who would do that!

“But you can’t hide the traces of demonic magic within you from my eyes!”

Could it be?!

“Demon King Satan! Why are you working part-time in the Hatagaya McGonald’s?!”

Flowing black hair, beautiful skin, and a pair of eyes that could spot any kind of monster; could it be that this girl was–

“You, you’re... the Hero, Emilia!”

The name of the Hero who had taken Ente Isla back from the clutches of the Demon King was called Emilia Justina. However, why was the Hero– known as the Saint of Ente Isla– here in Sasazuka?

“Indeed, I am Emilia! You should know why I have come here!”

“Could, could it be that...”

“I came to this world to track down the Demon King and the surviving Archdemon Alciel, who fled at the critical moment! If I leave you be, who knows how long it will take before the world is once more plunged into darkness? I shall defeat you before that happens!”

“Wait, waitwaitwait, Emilia! Listen to me!”

“Enough talk! Prepare yourself, Demon King!”

The Hero Emilia suddenly drew a knife and charged at Maou. Maou hurriedly leapt back to evade the blade which thrust through the bicycle that was between them. Bereft of support, Dullahan-go

collapsed, making a loud noise as though to protest this rough treatment.

“Uwah! That was dangerous!”

“Stop running! Stand there and let me kill you!”

“As if!”

A second stab soared over Dullahan-go and Maou avoided it by a hair's breadth.

He had just finished work and was on his way home, so obviously he had no weapons on hand. He might have managed to pull away from her, but things were clearly not in his favor. Still, Maou appeared to be taking it quite easy. That was because he had sized up Emilia's situation with a glance at her weapon.

“Oi, Emilia the Hero.”

“What?! Want to beg for your life?! There's nothing left to be said at this point!”

Maou managed to force the words out despite the overwhelming pressure of his opponent, and they had an unexpected effect.

“What happened to your holy sword?”

“...Guh.”

His opponent sucked in a breath.

“I've got a knife like that too. Did you buy it from the 100 yen store at Sasazuka?”

“How, how did you know?!”

Emilia was clearly shaken, and the knife in her hands dully reflected the red light of the traffic signal.

“You... don't tell me you're out of holy magic? Wait, even if you did have it, you can't waste it either, right?”

“...Ggk!”

The way Emilia grit her teeth proved that Maou's guess was on the mark.

While he had considered the possibility that Ente Isla might send pursuers after him, he had not expected them to dispatch the Hero right off the bat. It would seem the Hero had entered this world by passing through the Gate, most likely following the trail of demonic magic that Maou and Ashiya had left behind.

“But, but it's the same for the two of you, right? I can hardly sense any demonic magic from you either!”

“Ay, well, that's not wrong...”

Maou clicked his tongue at Emilia within his heart, but there was no point hiding it, so he decided to come clean.

“Even without my holy sword, there's nothing to fear from a Demon King who's lost his demonic magic and who survives on part-time work! Prepare yourself!”

Emilia raised her knife.

Just then, a beam of light illuminated the two of them.

In the end, Ashiya's investigation into the national art museum yielded no fruit. After packing away the leaflets he had collected, he started boiling 200 grams of the discounted 400 gram pack of udon noodles he had bought, and waited for Maou to return.

It would be very difficult to survive on the contents of the refrigerator. Ashiya had done his best to save money so he could investigate the museum, and he had successfully kept his shopping expenses to a minimum. Of course, he kept the existence of this extra money a secret from Maou.

“Haa... He'll probably find some excuse to bring black pepper fries home today as well...”

Ashiya chased away a bug that had flown in through the open

window and looked at the clock.

“Demon King-sama’s really late.”

“So let me get this straight, you’re Maou Sadao, and this is Yusa Emi-san, right? Why were the two of you quarreling in a place like that?”

“In order to defeat *him*!”



In the depths of the Hatagaya Station police post, Maou and Emilia sat on folding chairs, facing a frowning police officer.

“Look, I don’t know what your boyfriend did to you, but there’s no need to whip out a knife, right? Can’t you talk it through?”

The policeman’s words seemed to agitate the Hero Justina– Yusa Emi– who shrieked:

“You... What kind of relationship did you say I have with this man...?!”

“Looks like they think it’s a lover’s tiff,” Maou mumbled to himself, his face blank.

“This sort of thing’s become quite common recently. It must be a mistake of some kind, right? Why don’t you try talking to your boyfriend a little? If you decide to break up anyway, why not try a more peaceful resolution?”

“Like I said, I don’t have that sort of relationship with *him*...”

One of the nearby residents had called the police about a fight at the intersection, and so the Demon King and the Hero had been taken to the police post for a stern talking-to.

After enduring almost an hour’s worth of lecturing, they were released and their fight taken for a couple’s quarreling.

Emilia seemed to have been mentally scarred by the experience. She looked terribly vulnerable as she said:

“...I’ll let you off for today. However... don’t count on this happening again!”

“So what else is new?”

Emilia ignored Maou’s sarcasm.

“Hmph! You should be glad that you’re still alive. Besides, it’s not like I came away with nothing. Now that I have your address, I’ll see to it you get no peace from tomorrow onwards.”

“Are you sure a friend of justice ought to be saying such things?”

Maou’s reaction to her earnest intimidation was a blank face, and then he suddenly thought of something.

“Come to think of it, what happened to the umbrella I lent you today?”

A look of bafflement briefly crossed Emilia’s face, and then she immediately turned up her nose at him.

“Didn’t you say I could throw it away once I was done with it? I took my time to take it apart before getting rid of the thing.”

“That’s terrible! How could you!”

Maou’s wail came from the depths of his soul. Hatagaya District was currently in the midst of an environmental cleanliness campaign, so it was very hard to find discarded umbrellas on the street.

“Hmph! The very fact that I, the Hero, had to borrow an umbrella from the Demon King and thank him for it is an utter disgrace! I didn’t want to keep that filthy thing on me for a second!”

Then, Emilia produced a ridiculously cute and pink handkerchief before wiping her hands with exaggerated deliberation in full view of Maou.

“Anything touched by monsters is my enemy! From tomorrow onwards, you’d best be careful how you go home at night!”

After tossing off that decidedly un-Heroic line, she wobbled off into the nighttime streets of Hatagaya.

“...What a pain.”

The Hero had pursued the Demon King to another world.

But for some reason, he did not think anything would come of it, and he still had work tomorrow.

“Haa– if I tell Ashiya she’s here, he’ll start nagging me again. I

guess I'll keep it from him for now.”

By the time Maou had finished grumbling to himself and started on the way back, it was past midnight.

In the end, the truth came out in the morning.

Maou worked the afternoon shift, so he was eating the brunch Ashiya had made with the discount eggs he had bought yesterday. It barely qualified as fried eggs, being that there was nothing added to it– not even ketchup.

The two of them looked at each other when the doorbell rang. The man from MHK had already come yesterday, and the newspapers had stopped trying to push their product here since a long time ago.

The rent and their phone bills were automatically deducted from their accounts. That meant that this was a new salesman of some kind.

The sad thing was that neither of them had considered the possibility that the person calling upon them might be a courier or postal delivery worker.

“Who is it?” Ashiya asked as he stood up. The ventilation fan was on, so they could not pretend that nobody was home.

“Asking ‘who is it’, well Isn’t that polite of you, Alciel of the Four Archdemons?!”

Maou choked as he heard that voice, and the egg fell into his windpipe. His reflexive cough to clear his throat sent the debris into his nose, and he nearly passed out from the agony.

“Who, who is it?!”

Ashiya immediately leapt away from the door and took a stance.

“Who is it? Now that you mention it, you said the same thing when you fought me in the Demon King’s castle. Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten the name of the Hero, Emilia Justina!”

“It’s the Hero Emilia!”

Ashiya frantically looked back at Maou, who had tears in his eyes on account of the egg stuck in his nostrils.

“Oi! If you know who I am, then hurry up and open the door! Let’s have a showdown, fair and square!”

It was hard to believe, but nobody else in Japan would call him Alciel, besides Maou. He had worried that someone would pursue the Demon King here, but he had not expected the first harrier to be the Hero herself.

However, Alciel was not the Demon Army’s head strategist for nothing. Though he was briefly thrown off his stride by the unexpected occurrence, he had already deduced Emilia’s weakness from her actions.

Ashiya made sure the door was locked, then carefully fastened the door chain, closed all the windows opening to the common hallway, and then turned off the ventilation fan.

“Demon King-sama! It’s the Hero! The Hero’s come!”

“Oi! Oi, Alciel! I said open up!”

The Hero’s voice was clearly worried. It would seem she had sensed what Alciel was planning.

“Ah– ahh– got it, Ashiya, get me a piece of tissue paper.”

“Demon King? You’re in there too, aren’t you, Demon King?! Open up and prepare yourself!”

She rang frantically on the doorbell, but Ashiya seemed thoroughly unconcerned.

“What should we do? I didn’t expect the Hero to launch an attack here.”

“Ah~ I can’t get it out. Sorry I didn’t tell you, but I actually ran into her yesterday.”

“Say what?”

Maou’s nose was leaking snot as he said that, but Ashiya was so shocked that his legs went weak.

“She attacked me at the crossroads on the way back from work. In the end, someone reported it to the police as a fight and they brought us to the police post. That was why I came home so late last night.”

“That was the greatest shame of my life... They actually thought the Demon King and I were a couple!”

Waves of anger filtered in from the outside. Ashiya glanced at the door and then turned back to Maou with what sounded like a wail:

“Why didn’t you tell me that something like that had happened?!”

“Eh, it’s not like she did any real damage. Besides, she’s in the same situation as us.”

“You said... like us?”

Maou stuck a finger into his nose, trying to wrinkle the bits of egg out, and replied:

“Last night, she didn’t draw her holy sword even though she knew I was the Demon King Satan. Her holy sword is made of a celestial metal called ‘Heavenly Silver’ and uses holy magic derived from the Heavens. The fact that she didn’t draw it means—”

“...The Hero can’t use her holy magic freely? Which means she can’t draw on the power of the Heavens too?”

“Indeed. While using holy magic to defeat the Demon King isn’t exactly a waste when one is the Hero, there’s a huge difference between the two of us.”

“As in... lifespan?”

The avatar of wrath outside savagely stamped on the floor. The sound of cracking rose up from the cheap flooring of the hallways.

“Even assuming she can defeat us, there’s no guarantee she’ll be able to store up enough holy magic to go back within her lifetime. The people of Ente Isla live for about 50 years, and while Japanese women tend to live a long time, if we assume she lives until she’s 80, then this place will become her home instead.”

“In other words, the Hero can’t open a Gate, then?”

“I guess. Oi, let her in, she’s starting to cry.”

Upon closer listening, they could hear the sound of sobbing from outside the door.

“What a run-down house.”

Though her nose and eyes were red, Emilia held nothing back in her criticism as she entered the apartment.

Ashiya wanted to respond, but Maou stopped him. It was true, after all.

“I suppose the fact that there’s nothing here means it’s tidy, at least.”

“I can’t believe two men are actually staying in a place like this...”

“The Demon King’s Castle has always emphasized livability over comfort..”

After a great effort, Maou extracted the egg from his nose, and he resumed his meal.

“Well, that’s a simple breakfast.”

“Oi, Ashiya’s pretty good, you know. He can make a breakfast out of nothing, like magic.”

“Your praise honors me, Demon King-sama.”

Ashiya was so moved that he sat behind Maou and banged on a plate with his chopsticks. On the other hand, Emilia wrinkled her brows in annoyance. The Demon King and an Archdemon, seated

behind a miserable little dinner table? What kind of comedy was this, anyway?

“I can’t believe the Demon King’s only having fried eggs for breakfast. At least get some toast too.”

“We’re poor. Does that work for you?”

Maou seemed completely nonplussed.

“Of course not! What the hell! I came all the way to this world to kill a pair of bums like you? You suck!”

And as she looked at Maou, who wore a pair of running shorts over a pair of trunks, eating his breakfast while sitting cross-legged, Emilia broke down into tears.

Six pieces of sun-weathered tatami made up the room’s floor. The three-layered storage cabinet in the corner was lined with tattered cardboard to avoid damage the tatami mats. Facing it was another cabinet, screened off by a sun-bleached sliding door.

There were no blinds or a balcony beyond the opened window. The rusty window frame was completely broken down. All manner of clothes hung by the side of the window, most of which were stretched-out and plain-colored T-shirts and shorts. The washing machine for all that laundry could not fit into the room, so they had to put it in the communal hallway outside. Looking around, the wooden door with the streaky paint job was probably the toilet. It was clear that nobody else but the residents would ever use it, yet it still had a plastic sign reading “TOILET” on it. Naturally, it was a squat-type toilet.

The kitchen was filled with fragile, yet shiny plastic cookware, as well as some out of season porcelain dining utensils. At a glance, they looked like they had been bought from a 100 yen store. In addition, there was a trash bag stuffed full of McGonald’s wrappers. Presumably, they would dispose of it tomorrow.

The stainless steel trash can was lined with a new plastic bag, and it looked like it had come from a second hand store. It was covered in dents and sticky-tape residue which could no longer be cleaned off.

The medium-sized refrigerator– suitable for singles– took up a lot of space in the already-cramped kitchen. A fridge magnet with its sides chipped off held a McGonald's tray liner with a handwritten schedule reading "THIS MONTH'S ROSTER".

"I'm living better than you by myself. There's two men of working age here! Don't you think this is disgraceful?"

Emilia had intended to lecture Maou on his flaws, but she did not expect Maou to take something else away from her words.

"So you don't have any friends, then?"

"Shut up!"

Emilia reflexively tossed the box of tissue on the table at Maou. He dodged, and the tissue box hit a stack of free information pamphlets and job-seeker magazines secured with tape, which fell to the tatami with a pitiful sound.

"At first... at first the Archbishop was supposed to come with me! Once I defeated you, I could go back right away! But then... but then!"

At that time, Emilia had made a decision on the spot to charge into the Gate, in order to chase down the fleeing Demon King.

While she had rushed into the Gate, she had not expected it to close behind her the moment she stepped into it.

The last thing Emilia saw as she looked back at Ente Isla was the sight of one of her comrades, Olba Meyer of the Holy Church's Six Archbishops, looking at her with a shocked expression on his face.

"I see..."

“What about it?!”

Emi glared at the suddenly compliant Maou, but he merely nodded, indicating that she should continue speaking.

After coming to Japan, Emi’s experiences and remaining strength were comparable to that of Maou and Ashiya.

Frankly speaking, Emilia had found a better-paying job than Maou, and she lived in a better apartment too.

“Got a cell phone?”

“It’s a DoCoDeMo|8|.”

The phone Emilia produced was a new model which had only gone on sale recently. It was touch-screen operated and its performance rivalled that of laptop computers.

“...We’ve lost.”

“What?”

Maou and Ashiya’s phones were outdated models. Not only were they hard to use, but their only other accessory was a mediocre camera. That was because they had agreed that all a phone had to do was make calls and send text messages.

“So how long have you been in Japan?”

“Under a year.”

“How old are you?”

“17! Got a problem with that?!”

For the Japanese, a 17 year-old ought to be in high school and under the guardianship of their parents.

That being the case, why was she living a better life than Maou and Ashiya? Maou was confused as he pondered the topic, but he realized that it would be pointless even if he knew the answer. Therefore, he decided not to think any further about it.

“Rather than waste your time here, why don’t you go research a

way to get home? You've found us, but we don't have the money to move, so we'll be staying here for the time being. I shall unfold my grand plan for world domination from this six-tatami Demon King's Castle!"

Maou pointed at Emilia with his chopsticks as he regaled her with his grand lines. Emilia looked around at the apartment, and her face became a blend of suspicion, frustration and wariness.

"A Demon King who can't even eat gracefully... Do you think you can really conquer the world while you're busy working all day?"

"Don't speak of me in the same breath as those plebeian demons who can only settle matters with raw strength. You'd be terribly mistaken if you think all I've been doing in Japan is just working a part-time job!"

"Eh?"

For some reason, that doubtful noise had come from Ashiya. Maou ignored him and laughed.

"I shall conquer Japan!"

Now that he had finally started to sound like a Demon King, Emilia began getting nervous. Sensing this, Ashiya readied himself to respond. A single line from Maou could fill the air with tension, and—

"Now listen. McGonald's has a policy allows for part-timers to eventually become full-time staff."

"...Ah?"

—He could clear that tension away with another such line. Emilia and Ashiya looked at him, unable to get his meaning. What did McGonald's hiring policies have to do with the conquest of Japan?

"In Japan, your educational history and job history have a huge effect on your place in society. You know that too, don't you, Emilia?"

“Don’t use my name so casually! So what if it does?!”

“What a slow person you are. Listen up, in Japan, the only way for someone like me– who does not possess demonic magic or physical might– to attain power is to do so with a ‘full-time employee’s title!’” Maou declared, with a laugh that had once terrorized Ente isla.

“Listen well, Emilia the Hero. I shall become a full-time employee and show you!”

“...It won’t do you any good to tell me this sort of thing...”

Emilia froze, not knowing how to respond.

“Someday, I shall surpass the store leader and become a full-time employee, whereupon I shall accumulate wealth and social rank. Someday, I shall become someone great in Japan, and I shall have mankind bowing and scraping before me. Someday, I shall use that power to launch another invasion of Ente Isla! How about it, Emilia? Can you stop me?”

Ashiya had nothing to say. All he could do was dumbly watch their conversation.

Maou kept his chopsticks raised, looking at the silent Emilia for a good long while...

“...What nonsense are you babbling?”

In the end, Emilia looked away. Seeing that, Maou puffed up his chest, as though declaring his victory.

“Hmph! Of course, I doubt a mere human being could understand my lofty aspirations!”

“I think... she said that because she *did* understand them...” Ashiya mumbled.

Emilia sighed, and lowered her head powerlessly while saying:

“I feel really tired... like nothing else matters any more. I’m heading home.”

Emilia rubbed her reddened eyes and glared at Maou.

“But don’t get me wrong. This doesn’t mean I understand you or that I intend to let you off. I could kill you at any time with just my leftover power, but if I do that, I can’t go home. I can’t kill you if I want to go back. That’s all.”

“So why are you telling me all this?”

What did she plan to accomplish by being honest about her difficulties? Emilia looked on Maou’s baffled face and stated in a matter-of-fact tone:

“Don’t you think it’s unfair if I’m the only one who knows about your plans?”

Those words left Maou and Ashiya speechless.

“That’s very considerate of you.”

“I won’t take your life until I can return to Ente Isla and slay the Demon King. However, you’d better not get too cocky... haa.”

With a tired expression on her face, Emilia headed to the door.

“Also, in Japan my name is Yusa Emi. Don’t get it wrong.”

“Oh, got it.”

Just as Emilia opened the door and prepared to leave, she said:

“Still, what’s with ‘Sadao’? Young men nowadays don’t pick such names, do they?”

With that, she slammed the door, throwing up a plume of dust. Ashiya watched the closed door in silence. The sound of footsteps travelled down the hallway and downstairs, and then the quiet was finally restored.

The Demon King shouted at the now-gone Emi:

“Apologize to all the Sadaos in Japan!”

“Welcome! Will you be dining in today?”

“I have something to tell you.”

As usual, business was booming at the Hatagaya Station branch of McGonald's. Emi had changed into a grey outfit, different from what she had worn in the morning. She stood at the counter Maou was manning, not even bothering to hide the frown on her face.

“Takeout, then? Please, make your selection.”

“After you finish work tonight, meet me at the place from last night. I won't take no for an answer.”

“Would you like a set meal?”

“You're to come alone!”

“A la carte, then? I see. Then, please wait by the side of the counter. One Big Mag please!”

“I don't plan to fight you, so you *have* to come.”

“Thank you for buying from us. Do come again!”

Emi picked up the burger which she had been hustled into buying and paid up.

Maou had a professional smile on his face from the beginning of the encounter, but he was thinking, “*What a pain*” all the way through. That was because there was no way that their conversation would end peacefully.

“Maou-san,” someone called out from behind him.

“What is it, Chi-chan?”

She was Maou's understudy, Sasaki Chiho. She was a second-year high school student who had recently started working part-time here. Maou had been her mentor while she was in training, so she continued sticking to him even after she had officially started working.

She typically tied up her shoulder-length hair at work, while her

honest smile and her naturally cheerful personality received rave reviews from the customers. Maou also appreciated the fact that she was a quick learner.

“Don’t you think there was something weird about that customer?”

“That... the woman?”

“Mm, she seemed to be muttering creepy things to herself, but I don’t know what she was saying.”

“Well, you get all kinds of people in this line of work.”

“She seemed to be talking to you. Is she a friend?”

It was true that he knew Emi. When he thought a bit more about it, the 17 year-old Emi ought to be around the same age as Chiho, the second-year high-schooler. Still, why did they give such radically different impressions? It was not so much that Emi had matured early, but more that she had aged prematurely due to hardship.

“Mm, kind of.”

Maou had originally intended to bluff his way through this, but Chiho’s curiosity would not accept such a vague answer.

“Ah– that’s suspicious!”

“What is?”

Chiho put her hands behind her back as she looked up to Maou.

“She’s beautiful, isn’t she? Don’t you think so? Maou-san, what do you think?”

“Don’t ask me three times in a row! What’s with you? That woman and I... ah, welcome!”

No matter what he was doing, once a customer entered, his body would move on its own. This was a reflexive action for him now.

“Welcome! Will you be dining in today?”

This time, it was Chiho’s turn to man the counter. This was not a

busy period, so anyone could fill that place. When Chiho had first joined, she would take the initiative and look for a chance to help out, something which greatly impressed Maou. Therefore, he decided not to interfere with her, and took a step back.

The customer in question was a kindly-looking housewife holding a baby. She had a boy of around elementary school age by her side. Hatagaya was quite close to a residential district, so a combination of mother and child like this was fairly common after the lunchtime peak hours of the salarymen.

The housewife glanced back and forth between Chiho and the menu, but Chiho suddenly stopped operating the cash register, and after asking the customer to wait a while, she turned back to Maou.

“Ah... Maou-san.”

“Hm?”

When his understudy sought him for help, he could not whisper secretly in the background. He had to discuss and solve the problem between customer and worker, in order to help his colleagues grow. Doing this would also make the customers feel involved. Chiho looked at the mother and her children and said:

“That young man seems to have a food allergy.”

“An allergy, is it? I understand. May I ask which foods he is allergic to?”

While Chiho would be doing the explanation, Maou considered Chiho to be a relay for the customer’s instructions, and thus he spoke to her with polite language.

“Prawns and crabs. Also, fruits too.”

Maou nodded. Then he indicated the colored menu and explained it to the housewife.

“All products containing prawns must be specially labelled by law. Therefore, as you can see on the menu here, these items are all

made with fish and shellfish.”

“Oh!”

Chiho and the housewife gasped in awe.

“After that, there is the matter of the fruit. The labels indicate kiwifruits, oranges, peaches, and apples. Very few of our condiments use apples; for instance, the ketchup we use in our grilled burgers and the sauce for our salads, among others. In addition, you might wish to pay attention to the seasonal fruit ice cream and freshly-squeezed fruit juice on this submenu here.”

The housewife and Chiho listened earnestly to Maou’s lecture, while Maou highlighted all the menu items which she might have to pay attention to. After the housewife had made her choices while avoiding those items, Maou spoke to her again.

“By the way, would you like to use our microwave oven?”

“Eh?”

“Eh?”

Both Chiho and the housewife displayed their bafflement almost simultaneously. Maou looked at the baby she was holding and replied:

“I believe you might have baby food which can be heated up in a microwave. If you wish to have a meal with your son, would you not like to feed your baby as well? I apologize if this is none of my business.”

The housewife looked at the baby in her arms, and nodded shyly to Maou.

“Thank you. This ought to take 40 seconds in the microwave...”

The housewife produced a sealed package from the bag on her shoulder. Maou accepted it with both hands and passed it to Chiho.

“Sasaki-san, could you put this in the microwave to 20 seconds? Please remember to serve it with our customer’s meal.”

Since they were in front of customers, he had to address her by her surname. With the package in hand, Chiho was prepared to head to the kitchen—

“...Eh? Isn’t it 40 seconds?”

“That would be for a home microwave. The industrial microwave in our shop is twice the size of a home microwave, so 20 seconds will be more than adequate.”

“I-I understand!”

Chiho looked at Maou with worshipful eyes, then turned and headed into the kitchen.

After the bill was paid and the food was served to the customer on a tray, it was the customer who ended up thanking Maou several times instead. That was another step in his plan to become a full-time employee, and thus conquer Japan. Just as Maou felt that he was making progress—

“...What’s the matter, Chi-chan?”

Before Maou knew it, Chiho had sidled up beside him. Her eyes were sparkly as she looked up to him.



“Maou-san, you really *are* amazing!”

“Eh?”

“I mean, you remembered all the products using the allergenic ingredients and so on, right?”

“They’re all written up in the store office instructions.”

While Maou did not think much of it, Chiho seemed quite excited about it.

“Still, you’re amazing! You even thought about the baby’s food!”

“Really? Well, it might not be possible during peak hours, but if time permits, we ought to be flexible and tailor our responses to the customers’ needs. It’ll pay off in the long run.”

Chiho was the sort of person who believed in seeing through any task she started to the end. Thus, she sighed and said:

“Maou-san, you’re so cool! You look like a real working man!”

“Haha, ahh, well, I’m just a part-timer, though.”

Chiho’s eyes were filled with reverence and there seemed to be rose petals floating out behind her back. However, when she came to her senses, the look on her face was completely different.

“Ah, there was an earthquake last night, was your house okay, Maou-san?”

“Er...”

The speed at which high school girls could change topics was as hard to predict as the Gate which joined one world to another. When Maou had first started working with Chiho it had startled him, but he was used to it by now.

“It was fine, I guess? Our place is pretty old so my flatmate said the shaking felt very strong, but it shouldn’t have been that bad, right? At least, it felt that way to me.”

“Eh? Er... ah... it’s just as I thought!”

However, Chiho seemed quite shocked by that answer, and her surprised expression seemed a little unnatural.

“I asked my schoolmates and they said the same thing, but it hit my place pretty badly–”

“Oh?”

“Mom said there was a huge bang and shockwave, so she thought something had exploded. When I came home after school, I saw that all my CDs had fallen off the bookshelf. How unfortunate!”

“Eh? Was it that bad?”

“Are you doubting me too, Maou-san?”

Chiho puffed up her cheeks in annoyance. Maou smiled sheepishly and waved his hand:

“No, not at all. What happened after that?”

“A lot of our bowls and plates were broken and it took a lot of work to clean them up. Dad was busy making calls everywhere too.”

“Why did he have to make those calls?”

“Dad’s a police officer, and he was at home because he wasn’t on shift last night. However, he’s the district supervisor and the emergency contact person for the town council, so he had to ring up a lot of people. In the end, the disaster relief department told him that it wasn’t a big earthquake, which made him very sad.”

“Oh...”

“Maou-san?”

“...”

“Maou-san!”

“Eh? No, I was just wondering why it was just your house which ended up like that, Chi-chan. It really is quite strange.”

“That’s right... Al-also, Maou-san.”

“Hm?”

Chiho had been excited and anxious just a moment ago, but now her tone was subdued. She raised her head slightly to look at Maou and said:

“Just now, you said you had a flatmate, right?”

Maou looked down, and Chiho shifted her eyes away for some reason.

“Mm, a former subordinate... No, a friend.”

While he and Ashiya had already decided to go with the cover story of two friends renting a room and overcoming life’s hardships together, most of it was true. Maou sighed bitterly.

“Is that a girl, girl, girlfr-”

“We’re just two men squeezed into a shabby apartment, living a lonely and miserable life.”

“Eh? Ah? Mm– what, was that it? I see, so that’s how it was. That’s wonderful!”

“What’s so wonderful?”

“No-nothing! Ah, Maou-san, do you live on the first floor?”

“Nope, second floor. My friend said that if he couldn’t feel any vibrations despite living on the second floor, then it couldn’t have been much of an earthquake. Chi-chan, do you live in a high-rise?”

Chiho smiled stiffly and shook her head:

“We, we live in a detached house. Er, ah...”

“Hm?”

“If... if it’s convenient, maybe next time...”

“Oi, you kids over there!”

The person interrupting them was a head taller than Maou, with a model’s figure and lustrous black hair which would not look out of

place in a shampoo commercial. The person who had pinned up her hair and wore a brightly colored McGonald's uniform was the store leader of McGonald's Hatagaya Station Branch, Kisaki Mayumi.

“Ah, Kisaki-san.”

“You're supposed to be working, not talking. Chi-chan, have you done the nighttime store checks yet?”

“Ah! Oh no! I'm sorry! I'll go right away!”

Chiho had to clean up the store and check on its cleanliness every two hours. She hurriedly took out a record sheet from the shelf under the cash register and ran out from behind the counter.

“Maa-kun, you too! Don't spoil Chi-chan so much!”

Kisaki frowned, but she was not really angry. When the brass were not around, she took a casual tone with the employees, and refused to allow them to call her “store leader” or anything like that. She was a strong, yet generous woman.

She had appeared in many tray liner ads, and there was a horde of male customers who flocked to any store she worked at to spend their money. She was a very famous store leader. Why had someone with such an outstanding face and figure become a store leader out in the boondocks? It remained a mystery to this day. In addition, her age and body weight were top secret.

“Kisaki-san, weren't you the one who told me not to be too strict on her because you finally found someone who could fill out the roster and work for a long time?”

After saying that, the sound of clattering and things falling came from behind the door where the cleaning equipment was stored. Somebody had probably knocked it over while rushing.

“I'm very sorry!” Chiho apologized frantically from inside the door.

“That's true, but recently, the higher-ups have been making spot

checks quite often. If you get too chatty, it'll be hard to explain, no?"

No wonder. If even Emi had her eyes on this store, then others were most likely watching as well.

Speaking of which, Maou had never seen Kisaki explaining anything to the higher-ups. In fact, it felt like those higher-ups were avoiding her.

"Then, Maa-kun, have you tallied up the sales figures for the afternoon?"

Maou promptly produced a record of the lull period between the lunch and dinner hours, listing the number of customers and the amount they had taken in. Kisaki scanned the figures and nodded in satisfaction.

"Mm. We hit our sales targets earlier than expected, and with a healthy surplus! Well done, everyone! Drinks are on me tonight! Work hard for dinner too! Oh, that's right, Maa-kun, that was a flawless customer reception just now. I award you full marks for it. Continue being a good example for your kouhais!"

Kisaki was a person who was only concerned with the day's intake and improving the store environment. Thus, she had rated Maou highly on his performance evaluations and given him a raise, all because of his earnest devotion to improving their income.

Maou sincerely believed that surpassing Kisaki was the first step in world domination.

"Ah, come to think about it, there was an earthquake last night. Was your house alright, Kisaki-san?"

"An earthquake? There was one?"

The way Kisaki replied while looking at the figures made him feel that she was not overly concerned about it. She lived in a nearby apartment block, and if that was her impression of the earthquake, then she had probably not felt it at all.

“Ah, there’s no point being worried about this sort of thing now.”

While he felt bad for Chiho, he had to consider what he would do about the midnight meeting after work. Maou’s shift ended at 12am, so he would probably reach home as late as he had last night. The more Maou thought about it, the more melancholy he became.

“So what’s this about?”

Emi stood at the intersection in the housing district, projecting an air of confidence and stress. She was dressed in a pair of tight-fitting jeans and a shirt, her arms folded across her chest. However, he did not know if he might whip a weapon out of nowhere, so he had to be careful.

Maou had a cup of McGonald’s Platinum Roast ice coffee in his right hand, courtesy of Kisaki and her “Drinks are on me tonight”. He made ready to throw it at any moment.

“I have a question for you.”

He was also mounted on Dullahan-go, so he could flee at any time.

“Do... do you still intend to return to Ente Isla?”

“Ah? What do you mean?”

Maou thought about what Emi was trying to say.

“Er, yes?”

“Don’t you want to stay in this world?”

“Of course not. What brought this on?”

“I saw you at work today.”

“Where were you spying from, the bookshop opposite us again?!”

Emi did not answer Maou’s question.

“You speak plainly, you smile brightly, your store leader trusts you, your kouhai admires you, and you can adapt to handle any

kind of customer. It's clear that you're a capable person, the ideal MgRonald's employee."

"Are you from Kansai or something?!"

Maou was aware that there was a dispute over the official abbreviation for MgRonald's, which divided the otherwise-peaceful Japanese people between the East and the West. Incidentally, Maou was in the "Mags" faction that belonged to the East.

"I thought you were just joking this morning with that speech of yours, and I was prepared to dismiss it. But after seeing the way you work, I don't think it was all a lie."

Emi shrugged.

"If you could happily live out the rest of your life in this world, I wouldn't force myself to defeat you. Isn't your kouhai a cute girl? She clearly looks up to you."

"Mm, well, I *did* train up Chi-chan. She hasn't officially started working part-time for long, but she learns fast, and she's very polite."

Given Maou's proud answer, it was hard to imagine that a Demon King would make a mistake in such things.

"So if you live your life here, the world will be at peace, no? You can ensure the eternal prosperity of the Hatagaya Station branch with your talents, and there'd be no need to fight with me. Why not put down roots in this world with Alciel?"

"Alciel might be my subordinate, but why do I have to live a miserable life of growing old with him?"

"Well, they say it's kind of in style nowadays."

Maou frowned hard.

"Oi, do you have a thing for persuading two men to spend their lives together?"

"As if! It was just a suggestion."

Emi decided to interrupt the topic.

“In any case, give up on Ente Isla! I hope you can find a new life here that you can call your own.”

Maou immediately answered, “No way. I will definitely go back and conquer Ente Isla!”

Those words were a sincere expression of his will. He had not lost his determination yet.

Emi too understood his meaning.

“...I understand.”

“So you’re done?”

“Mm, yes. I will keep chasing you until I kill you. I was just making sure of that.”

“Well, it’s not like you’re just starting now.”

Thinking the conversation was over, Maou put his feet on Dullahan-go’s pedals. Just as he was about to leave–

“Uwah!”

An impact ran through the front tire. It made Maou lose his balance, and he fell.

It was an incredibly theatrical fall, to the point where even Emi– who was prepared to leave in style– could not help but gasp in surprise. If he had fallen just a bit more to the side, his head might even have hit the curb.

The coffee in his hand sprayed out, splashing onto the road with the ice cubes within it.

“Oi, what are you doing?!”

Without thinking, Emi’s body moved on its own to help Maou up.

“Ow... Ah – that scared the hell out of me. Did I hit something?”

“What kind of Demon King are you? Get a grip!”

“Shut up!”

Maou was so startled that tears had nearly leaked from his eyes. Beside him, Emi picked up his bicycle.

“What a shame. It was still new.”

After putting down the kickstand, Emi indicated the front tire.

“Ah! The tire burst!”

Maou fell to his knees and wailed in despair.

A delicious sensation of schadenfreude came over Emi for a moment.

“Pull yourself together, Dullahan-go! It’s just a scratch! You can’t die from that! I just bought you!”

After seeing Maou’s earnest plea to his cheap bicycle, Emi felt sympathy for him instead.

“Oi, it’s just a burst tire, you don’t need to carry on like that. Just take it to a bike shop tomorrow. If it’s just an inner tube puncture they can fix it for about 1000 yen. Replacing the outside’s more expensive, though.”

“R-really?”

Maou hugged Dullahan-go, and looked up to Emi with tearful eyes. Emi felt the earnest desire to back away from him.

“Y-yes, really! Don’t get so close to me! Get away from me! You’re filthy!”

“Where am I dirty?! Still, I see... then I’ll go fix it tomorrow morning. Sorry, but thanks for your advice.”

“You’re welcome... as if! It’s not like I wanted you to be grateful or anything! I just saw how you got yourself all dirty over a small thing like a blown tire and I ended up...”

Emi could not finish her sentence.

“Eh? An earthquake?”

In that moment, the two of them realized that the ground where they stood was shaking. Before Emi could verify this with Maou, she heard a *crack* from somewhere. This time, something had happened to Dullahan-go's back tire.

“Uoooh!”

“Ahhhh!”

As they exclaimed, the traffic light broke. The Demon King and the Hero cringed as they heard the fragments fall.

“We’re...”

“...Being attacked?”

The answer to that was a *crack* from near their feet.

“Oi oi, this is bad!”

“Hur-hurry up and run!”

The two of them darted into a nearby alley. Bursts of fire and explosions followed at their heels.

In nighttime Sasazuka, the silent sniper turned its fangs on the Demon King and the Hero.

“What the hell! What’s going... ahhh!”

“Keep quiet! If you’re a Hero, don’t get run over by a car!”

In order to avoid being sniped, the two of them had taken cover behind a car in a coin-operated carpark. After that, they fled to Koushu Street. There were no pedestrians here, but many cars.

The highway above their heads blocked out the sky, and the two of them put their backs to the solid steel roller shutter of an office building as they panted loudly.

“What just happened?” Emi asked as she caught her breath. Maou replied between gasps:

“Somebody launched a sniper attack at the location where the Demon Lord was meeting the Hero. Logically speaking, this has

something to do with Ente Isla. Besides, this country has very strict firearms laws.”

“You can’t be sure about that! For all we know it’s some street punk with an air rifle—”

“You think the hooligans now are really that good? Get down!”

Maou forced Emi’s head down.

Immediately after that, a small hole opened up in the metal shutter, where Emi’s head had been just a moment ago.

“...Besides, since when could BB pellets go through a building’s roller shutters?!”

“Hang on! How long are you going to keep pressing on my head?!”

Emi shook off Maou’s hand, and Maou obliged by bringing it back to himself. Then he examined his hand, and asked:

“So your body’s about the same as an average Japanese person?”

“No matter how strong I am, I can still cut my hands with a cooking knife and it hurts when I stub my toe on a corner!”

This implied that Emi was not as resilient as she was before. Maou had originally been a demon, so in addition to superhuman strength, he was also possessed of extraordinary resilience and toughness. That said, after living for a year in Japan, he was very aware that his body was only about as strong as that of an average Japanese male.

“That one came from straight ahead, didn't it?”

“Hard to tell. Did you hear a gunshot?”

“I didn’t hear anything like that... Wah!”

With that, Emi headbutted Maou, and the two of them rolled in the same direction. Looking back, they saw that the steel shutter door was now very well-ventilated; a fate they would have shared if they had been just a bit slower.

“Incredible.”

“Don’t look down on me, I’m the Hero, after all.”

“Sorry, but could you please get off me? I won’t be able to dodge the next attack in this state.”

“You were the one who threw yourself under me to be my cushion! Besides, I’d have gotten up even if you didn’t say so!”

Maou felt that she was being unreasonable, but this was not the time to argue. The two of them quickly got up and regained their balance.

In order to deal with attacks that could come from anywhere, they put their backs against each other and stayed wary of their surroundings. Just then, Emi suggested:

“Want to run for the train station?”

“True, the bars in front of Sasazuka Station are still open, and there ought to be a lot of people there. It feels like a gamble, but we have no idea when our opponent will strike again. Can you run?”

“Faster than you. You just ride around on that bike of yours every day.”

“Good. Let’s move!”

They did not know if the attacks would continue after they ran out. Until now, there had been nobody on the streets, but as they got closer to the train station, the number of pedestrians began increasing. The salarymen gathered at the brightly lit bars near the train station.

With their backs to the train station wall, they scanned their surroundings for a good long while. Some of the middle-aged salarymen had a good laugh at their expense, but they did not have the energy to bother about random people on the street.

Maou and Emi were stuck there for quite some time. By the time they concluded that their opponent would not attack in a populated

area, they were physically and mentally fatigued.

“What was that all about?”

Emi took big lungfuls of air as she combed her sweat-slicked fringe aside with her fingers. A panting Maou replied:

“I don’t know... but that wasn’t a simple sniping attack. Those were bolts of demonic magic.”

“Demonic magic...?”

Emi’s eyes went wide.

“All I know is that back at the building, the shot aimed at your head came from the direction we ran from, but it turned a corner in mid-air to hunt you down.”

“That means—”

“Our opposition is strong and they know our true identities.”

“Is there anyone else like that besides Alciel?”

“There should be. I couldn’t sense any trace of them, which means I can’t deduce who it was.”

Maou sighed in relief, and stretched.

“Really, all this happened because of you.”

Emi could not stop herself from retorting:

“The hell? Are you saying it’s *my* fault?!”

“If you had picked a more normal time and place, this ruckus wouldn’t have happened!”

“It’s your fault for working so late!”

“You could have met me in the day, right?”

“I work in the morning and afternoon!”

“Like I’d know that.”

“Wait! Where are you going?” Emi called out to Maou, who looked

terribly exhausted and was trying to leave.

“Home.”

“Are you trying to run away by yourself?”

“Obviously. You’d better head home soon. If you could hang around for so long around here, it should be close, right? See you.”

“Hey...”

Maou left Emi’s voice in the crowd and set off on the lonesome road home. He felt bad about abandoning his newly-bought bicycle, but the attacker might still be in the area. All he could do was return in the morning to collect Dullahan-go.

In addition, he had not told Emi about this, but Maou had gleaned a clue from this attack.

The fact that he knew the attacker was able to freely use demonic magic was a big coup for Maou. While he was not sure about the true identity of his opposition, he had once been the Demon King, ruler of the Demon Realm and very nearly the supreme overlord of all Ente Isla. If there was a chance, he was confident that he could use his stored demonic magic to fight and then plunder his opposition’s demonic magic.

In fact, that was how he had gained power in the Demon Realm.

Since he did not have to work tomorrow, he resolved to thoroughly investigate those traces. Having made up his mind, Maou prepared to walk through the darkened residential district. But before he could do that—

He realized someone was behind him.

Was it the attacker? However, Maou could not sense murderous intent or demonic magic. It must have been a drunkard headed in the same direction at him. However, the other party seemed to have noticed him paying attention, and they were keeping their distance.

While he could see his apartment now, Ashiya had pretty much

run out of demonic magic, so he could not involve him in the fighting, no matter what.

His strength was essential, be it while conquering Ente Isla or living in Sasazuka.

Maou darted into a lightless alley within the residential district. If this was a resident, they would continue on, but anyone following him would be confused.

The footsteps did not stop, as though their owner had not spotted Maou hiding in a dark corner. Just as Maou thought he had been mistaken and poked his head out–

He realized that the other party was heading for his apartment block– Villarosa Sasazuka. That person wavered a bit in front of the steps before climbing to the second floor.

Eventually, that person stopped before Apartment 201; the one with the plaque that read “MAOU”.

“Look, while I said you could come at any time...”

Maou called out to the other party. Perhaps they did not expect someone to hail them in the middle of the night, but the uninvited guest shrank into themselves and turned back to look at Maou.

“After what happened just now, I hope you won’t try a night attack. It’ll just inconvenience the neighbours. Our landlady lives nearby, and I’d rather not meet her if I can avoid it...”

“It’s not like that...”

Before him stood a dejected Emi. Unlike how she had been just now, her face was pale, her breathing was hurried, and the way she looked made him quite worried. Was she not feeling well, or had she been hit by a magic bolt while he had not been paying attention?”

“Oi, what’s with y-”

Maou had spoken to her out of concern, but he had not expected

her to angrily retort:

“It makes me so mad to have to ask the likes of you for help... you could even call it betraying the world.”

“Oi, are you here to pick a fight?”

Maou could not resist the urge to poke fun at her words, but-

“...Tonight... could... could I...”

“Could I?”

Emi’s pale face flushed pink for a moment, and then she lowered her head.

“Could you let me... let me stay the night? My... my wallet... I don’t know where I dropped it...”

Maou’s jaw dropped open, and he was so surprised that he could not close it again.

“What? The Hero Emilia?!”

Ashiya– who had been waiting for Maou to return home– caught sight of the crestfallen Emilia hiding behind his master and immediately took a battle stance. However, Maou waved him off in irritation.

“Ahhh, it’s fine, it’s fine, she’s not in the mood to fight.”

“How can you be so relaxed? You’re the great Maou-sama! How could you come home with the Hero in the early hours of the morning?”

“Could you not put it like that?! Besides, it’s only two!”

“It’s already morning!”

Emi, on the other hand, stood meekly in front of the door.

“We were attacked just now. Our enemy is a stealthy chap who can use demonic magic blasts.”

Maou's explanation was clear and concise, but Emi no longer had the strength to interrupt.

“And then, she lost her wallet while we were fleeing.”

Emi seemed to shrink as she heard those words. She looked like she was about to vanish.

“She couldn't get a cab or go to a netcafe, and there was nobody she knew nearby. She lives in Eifuku-cho, but it'd take a long time to go back by foot.”

“But, but... if she dropped her wallet at this time of night, then she should have gone back to the place where she might have lost it and looked for it...”

“We just came back from making a police report. While we don't know who our enemy is, we'll get into a lot of trouble if she gets killed. Ahhhh, it's all been arranged. She's going to take the first train home tomorrow, so just let her curl up in a corner somewhere until then.”

Ashiya grabbed his head.

“Alright, come in. Find a place and sit down. Let's get this out of the way first, don't expect luxuries like guest-only items and so on.”

“...I got it,” Emi muttered.

“Emilia! What kind of attitude are you showing Demon King-sama when he has displayed the depths of his magna—”

“Ashiya, shut up, do you want the landlady to pay us a visit? Oi, Emi.”

“What?!”

Maou tossed a towel onto Emi's face.

“Cover yourself up with this. If you want a pillow, there's towels over there. I'll lend you a thousand yen for today, so don't miss the train.”

Emi grit her teeth in despair and humiliation, and then accepted the 1000-yen note Maou produced from a wallet that had come from a 100-yen shop.

“Emilia! Those funds are a personal loan from Maou-sama’s dwindling finances! You’d best make good use of them!”

“Shut up! I know that! You think I wanted this to happen? Thanks for the 1000 yen!”

“This, this woman...”

Ashiya looked like he was about to fume from all the holes on his head, but Maou did not seem to mind at all. Instead, he took out his towel from a nearby cabinet and covered himself up with it.

Upon seeing this, Emi silently sat down, wrapping herself in the towel. The Demon Lord was now a Japanese person, but Emi was not careless enough to just lie down in a demon’s home. As she tugged on the edge of the towel to cover herself up, she got a whiff of the scent of their detergent.

“...I use the same stuff at home too...”

“Please don’t wrinkle it, Ashiya refuses to buy softener.”

Maou picked up Emi’s whispered answer, so he lay back and replied:

“I-I was just saying that. You didn’t need to reply.”

Emi had not expected a response to that, so she hurriedly turned over, curling up even more tightly.

“Fine, fine, fine, Ashiya, you go to bed too. Emi, you don’t have to lock the door when you leave. Goodnight then, everyone.”

Right after that, Maou began snoring quietly. The speed at which he fell asleep left Emi speechless.

Ashiya sized them both up.

“This doesn’t mean I trust you. Don’t try anything funny!”

Goodnight!”

He then lay down, without wasting any more words. Much like his master, the minion promptly fell asleep. For all his wariness of Emi, he was so unguarded while sleeping that it was almost laughable.

Emi studied their goofy-looking faces as they slept, and she began to feel that she was being very silly for being so paranoid. With that, she slowly lay down herself.

“I need to cancel my bank card and my Kakui credit card... I wonder how much money’s still in my season pass.”

As Emi thought about the contents of her lost wallet, she grew even more depressed.

“...Why do I have to do this...”

Borne down down by fatigue and sadness, Emi slowly drifted off into dreamland, muttering quietly enough that only she could hear.

Once Emi started snoring, Maou– his eyes still closed and his breathing still at the same even rhythm– said:

“We’ve got each other, but it looks like she only has herself.”

“Yes.”

“Since the beginning, we’ve gone through a lot of hardship too, haven’t we? When I think about how she had to endure all of that by herself... well, I don’t want to be her friend, but I do feel sorry for her.”

“Really, you’ve grown soft-hearted, Maou-sama.”

“It’s just for the time being. In exchange, I had her promise not to harass us for a while.”

“That can’t be helped, then.”

“Well, if she keeps her word, that’ll be fine... hm?”

Something flashed at the corner of Maou’s eye.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, just a text on the phone.”

He scooped up the phone he had left on the floor and glanced at its screen. He had received two messages.

“Huh? One’s from Chi-chan... the hell, don’t look!”

Maou twisted away from Ashiya, who was trying to peek at the message in question.

“The other one’s from an address I’ve never seen before. Who sent it?”

That text message came from an unregistered sender. The address seemed to be a jumble of alphanumeric characters. Maou suspected that it had been sent to the wrong person or it was some kind of ad.

“Maou-sama?” Ashiya asked quietly. He had noticed the way Maou’s face had turned serious as he read the message.

“Oi, Ashiya... do you think it’s possible to receive two messages at the same time, one from a person you know and one from a stranger, both of them saying the same thing?”

The contents of Chiho’s and the mysterious stranger’s message read like they had discussed them with each other ahead of time.

『Subject: None. Message: Please be careful, there will be more earthquakes.』

『Subject: Maou-san, what should I do? Message: There was another earthquake, what should I do? – Chiho.』

CHAPTER 2

THE DEMON KING'S DATE WITH HIS KOUHAI IN SHINJUKU

魔王、新宿で後輩とデートする



Emi was gone by the time Maou and Ashiya woke up the next day.

The towel she had used was neatly folded on top of the washing machine, while the key to the apartment door lay on the floor under the window, and on the kitchen counter was–

“What’s this?”

“Some kind of pickled vegetables?”

There was food in small bowls; pickles mixed with vinegar, miso, and sliced grapes. Ashiya did not remember preparing it.

“So this is how she pays back the debt of a night’s stay? Let me test it for poison.”

Ashiya peeled back the layer of cling wrap and sampled a piece of pickle.

“...Hm. Our foe is quite skilled.”

“Is it good?”

“It’s not bad.”

“Oh? I don’t usually eat this sort of thing.”

As he said that, Maou tried a bit of it himself.

“Why are the keys on the floor?”

“She probably opened the window before heading out and threw the keys back in. There’s a grille on the hallway windows, so we’d be safe even if they weren’t locked.”

“Well, that’s a Hero for you– virtuous in thought and deed.”

Ashiya picked up the keys and snorted.

“What would you do in her position?”

“Well, obviously I’d lock the door and then take the key with me.”

“That’s pretty evil.”

“Well, I *am* a demon. Got a problem with that?”

Emi alighted at Eifuku-cho station along the Keio-Inokashira line and spent seven minutes walking back to her home, apartment 505 at the “Urban Heights Eifuku-cho” building. She was surprised that she had actually slept until the departure time for the day’s first train.

Though it was merely a broken-down apartment in Sasazuka with the unrealistic name of “Villarosa”, it was still the Demon King’s Castle. How careless could she possibly get? Worse, she had even used the Demon King’s money to take the train! It made her gnash her teeth in resentment.

“This is a stain upon my life.”

Still, she had to use what money she had left to go to Shinjuku. Emi had work today, after all.

While she could withdraw money from the bank with her savings book and her signature chop, the bank where Emi had opened an account had no branches near Eifuku-cho.

She charged into her shower. The Demon King’s Castle had left its mark on her in the form of a musty, old-tatami odor, and she wanted to wash it off her.

Emi had some time before she had to go to work, but she felt that if she did not do it right away, her body would be stained with the stench of evil.

She rinsed herself with hot water, and patted her head— where Maou had pressed when he helped her avoid the magic bolt assault. Her body shuddered as she recalled the bowling ball grip he had taken while pushing her head down.

Fortunately, she had bought a new bottle of shampoo beforehand. She spent twice the usual time washing her hair, then added moisturizer, and topped it off with hair conditioner at the end to ensure complete protection.

She scrubbed her body forcefully, as though the places where Maou had touched her were contaminated with some kind of disease. Half of the moisturizing antibacterial soap she had just bought was gone in a flash.

After stepping out of her shower, Emi wrapped her hair up with a towel to absorb the water, and then stepped into the living room. She picked up the remote control which sat on a kotatsu with a floral-print cover, and turned on the TV.

Japan was very sensitive to shooting cases, no matter how far away or how isolated they were. While the bullets in question were magic projectiles, they had still damaged asphalt roads, broken traffic lights and wrecked a building's steel roller shutters. If that happened in Tokyo, then they would be viewed as shooting incidents, and under normal circumstances they would definitely make the morning news.

MHK was currently broadcasting the subway and road traffic conditions. Given that the capital's Japan Railways (JR) and the civilian railways were operating normally, the train which ran on the Keio-Inokashira line— which Emi took to work— ought to be on time.

After that was the news segment. It would seem it had become a headline, and the TV screen showed countless reporters squeezed onto the intersection where she and Maou had been talking yesterday.

The police had surrounded the intersection with yellow police tape. There were also glimpses of the tragic state of the building shutter which had been shot up yesterday. The report only stated that a shooting had occurred, with no mention of the origin or any other information.

She changed the channel, and the other news bulletins seemed to say the same thing. However—

“Ah, it's them!”

One of the news cameras had captured an image of Maou and Ashiya among the crowd of residents gawking at the scene. Emi resisted the reflexive impulse to turn off the TV. While they had only been shown for a split second, from the looks on their faces, the two of them looked like they were having a serious discussion. Emi guessed that Maou was explaining yesterday's situation to Ashiya—

“...Also discovered a bicycle with burst front and rear tires abandoned in the middle of the intersection. The police believe that the owner may be able to help with the investigation and are currently seeking them.”

“That... idiot...”

So that was why they looked so serious! They had probably not expected the situation to end up like this. All this was because they thought it would be fine to pick up the bicycle in the morning.

Once the police recovered the bicycle, they would be able to trace the owner. That would lead them to Maou Sadao of Villarosa Sasazuka.

“Eh, not my problem.”

With that, Emi left the TV on and returned to the bathroom to properly dry her hair out.

Maou was a victim here, so even if the police thought he had something to do with this, it was not a loss for Emi. Rather, if he really was arrested, she would be overjoyed.

The news had changed to something else during this time. Apparently, someone in strange clothing had begun mugging women and old people, as well as robbing convenience stores in the middle of the night. As Emi heard all this grim news, she grew melancholic.

This was a depressing day, and she had the feeling that more depressing things would happen.

Emi worked as a customer service operator.

There was a commercial district about ten minutes by foot from the eastern exit of Shinjuku Station. Her workplace was located in the office building of a large telecommunications company affiliated with DoCoDeMo, where she handled customer complaints and provided customer service.

This was the first job Emi had found after coming to this world. Apparently, customer service was not a very popular field, but she had continued with it until now.

Due to a lack of workers, her salary was higher. In addition, Emi was calm and had a nice voice, so she was quite well-regarded in the company.

On top of that, Emi had the ability to comprehend all the languages of this world.

It was a form of telepathy which allowed her to understand concepts even if they were presented in a language she had never heard before. She could also ensure that the other party understood her by sending those concepts back to them. To a bystander, it appeared that she could converse fluently in any language, be it English, French, Korean, Chinese, and so on.

After Emi reached her office, she changed to her uniform of a grey pencil skirt and blazer on top of a dress shirt and a bowtie. After that, she clocked in and went to her assigned place. Since she was not a full-time employee, she should not have been assigned a desk of her own. However, her department frequently ran short on staff, so they were typically given a space of their own in the office.

“Good morning, Emi.”

“Ah, morning, Rika.”

Her neighbor– Suzuki Rika– called out to her. Their employee numbers differed by only a single digit, so whenever they were working on the same day, they usually ended up next to each other.

Rika's brown hair was made even more eye-catching by the grey uniform she wore.

"Say, wasn't that shooting incident pretty close to your place, Emi?"

Emi's pulse quickened for a moment, but naturally, she did not show it on her face.

"It was three stops away."

"Still, it's crazy the way you can have shootings in the center of town. Japan's becoming a worse place by the day."

The morning news had only described it as a "shooting incident", but Rika seemed to have interpreted it as a "mass shooting" instead.

"There's been a lot of earthquakes recently too, and then there's that pervert who goes around robbing people in the streets, so of course I'd feel uneasy about it. Oh yes, did you know? There's a new curry store opening today."

Women in this world flitted quickly between topics. Emi was used to it by now.

"Hm... I didn't know that."

"I heard it's a branch from a big franchise in Shimokitazawa, want to try it for lunch?"

"Eh... if it's famous, won't you have to line up for it?"

"But it should be good, right?"

When Emi had first arrived in Japan, she was astounded by the sheer variety and taste of the food available in Japan. In particular, the dish called "curry" blew her mind; it was so delicious that she considered it revolutionary, and even after becoming used to life in Japan, her opinion of it had not changed. Therefore, Rika's offer was deeply tempting, but she had other things to take care of today, so she had to refuse with a shake of her head.

"I'm sorry, but I don't have time to line up today. I lost my wallet."

“Eh? No way!”

Rika looked so shocked that Emi was briefly worried that she would fall off her chair.

“My season pass, bank card and credit card were all inside there. In addition to all the paperwork, I have to go to places with a teller to withdraw money...”

“Uwah, that means you won’t be able to line up, then.”

“Sorry.”

“Mm, it’s okay. How about this– what if we went to Mag’s instead?”

“Sorry, Mag’s is right out.”

Rika was not just Emi’s colleague, but the first friend she had made in this world. The fact that she called McDonald’s “Mag’s” was entirely due to her influence.

While Maou had needled Emi about not having friends, in truth, she had made a lot of them at her workplace. It was simply that none of them had come from the same world as she had. If only one of them lived near Sasazuka or Hatagaya, she would not have had to go through last night’s ordeal.

“Still, it’d be bad if you didn’t cancel those cards soon, right?”

“I’ve already cancelled them. It’s just for a while, but that’s all I can do with just my phone.”

“I see... then no matter where we go, lunch is on me, to cheer up the broken-hearted Emi!”

“It’s fine.”

Emi used the computer she had been issued to check her work email. There ought to be a list of items she had to pay attention to today.

Soon, an extension somewhere was ringing.

Since the company was under the DoCoDeMo umbrella, all the calls which came in were naturally related to mobile phones. The digest email she had received noted that service to certain parts of the city was disrupted last night, due to electromagnetic interference.

If any complaints came in, they would surely be directed to her team. Emi heard Rika sigh from beside her. She was probably thinking the same thing as well.

After putting her phone to standby, Emi's extension rang. In short, this caller was an old gentleman who did not quite understand the instruction manual. Emi patiently explained it to him, and five minutes after the call ended, another one came in. This one had been transferred to her from another extension, and there was a note saying that this was a foreign language call.

Perhaps the people in this department were useless, but every time a foreigner called them, they dumped it on Emi.

After the call connected, she realized that the person on the other side was from China. Apparently, he could not understand the Japanese instruction manual, so he had tried calling the number listed on the cover.

Emi handled call after call, most of which ran along similar lines. By the time she noticed, it was time for lunch. The number of incoming calls had fallen off, since it was close to noon.

"Ahhh... seriously, we're getting too many complaints today!" Rika moaned from beside her. "At least try to read the freaking manual, old man!"

A middle-aged man had called her up and she had spent over an hour wrangling with him about the detail (or lack thereof) of the instruction manual's explanation. She had pounded her desk several times with a frozen smile on her face.

"Then, where are you going today, besides the bank?"

“Hm~”

Recently, she had been blowing off her colleagues’ lunch invitations because she had been keeping an eye on Maou. As she thought about it, Emi suddenly felt furious, and she angrily said:

“Nowhere, it’s just the bank!”

“Kakui, right? You need to cancel your card. How about after that? I think there was an okonomiyaki place near Kakui; how about it? If we go around this time, we shouldn’t need to line up.”

“Got it. Just give me a while. The nearest bank is... huh?”

Just then, Emi’s extension had another foreign-language call transferred to it.

“Urgh— just my luck to get one of these just before lunch.”

“It can’t be helped. Work hard!”

Their lunch hours were determined by the number of people who were working that day. If they were unlucky and ran into mouthy customers, their break times would be pushed back.

Emi tried to soothe Rika, who was visibly unhappy. Then she put on her earpiece and took the call.

“Thank you for your call. This is Emi Yusa, DoCoDeMo, Customer Service Operator. What about your—”

『Yusa?』

“Eh? Er, yes.”

She had reflexively responded in Japanese.

The voice on the other end was somewhat garbled and belonged to a male. He repeated the surname Emi had supplied. It was only two syllables, but it was clearly Japanese.

“Yes, I’m Yusa...”

『Yusa... huh? Looks like you’ve completely blended into Japanese society, Emilia the Hero.』

“...Hngh!”

Emi suddenly drew in a breath. Rika was standing beside her and she could not let her get suspicious, but she could not help her trembling.

“And who might this be?”

『I’m someone who knows about the Demon King and the Hero, and also someone who’s planning to destroy the two of you.』

The voice did not ring a bell for Emi.

“Does that mean the one who kept hounding us last night was...”

『I certainly didn’t expect the Hero and the Demon King to join forces.』

“It wasn’t my intention to do so.”

『Kukuku, I thought so. In any case, just think of me as an assassin from Ente Isla. Last night was merely to say hi..』

“...”

Just as Emi was pondering his identity, the man on the other side said something which beggared belief.

『I shall eliminate the Demon King and Hero who crossed over to the other world. That is my mission, and it is also the will of Ente Isla.』

“Say what?!”

Emi– no, Emilia– could not hide her shock.

Peace was returning to Ente Isla by human hands. Why did they want to kill her?

“...I, we... we need to consider the present situation before we can give you a reply...”

『Hehe... consider the situation? The Hero and the Demon King fleeing like rabbits from an attack like that? I’d like to see what you’re going to consider.』

As she heard that repulsive voice, which sounded like it was echoing from the darkness, Emi understood. That was the voice of a monster. She immediately calmed down, and resumed her Hero's persona.

Emilia Justina stoically asked:

“Alciel should be the only surviving member of the Archdemons. Who exactly are you?”

『...』

“Looks like you were trying to rattle me by mentioning the will of Ente Isla, but it won't work on me. I won't listen to anything the Demon World has to say.”

『Really now, then it's a shame I couldn't gain your trust. I'll be visiting you again soon.』

Surprisingly, the other party then hung up.

Emi exhaled, and then removed her earpiece.

Rika was somewhat surprised, being that she had no idea what Emi was saying and what kind of call she had just received. Emi turned to the confused Rika and said:

“There's all sorts of people at this time of the year.”

“Mm, yes—”

Though Rika was quite shocked, she decided that it would be better not to pry further.

And so, it was time for lunch. Emi forced a smile, then turned to the worried-looking Rika and said:

“Sorry about that. What should we do? How about eating first? The bank's bound to be crowded at this time, anyway.”

“That's true... well, since you said it, let's go with it, Emi.”

Emi headed for the changing room and put her cell phone, savings book and chop into her handbag. Just as she was about to leave, her

phone rang.

Emi felt her heart speed up. No matter how she tried to act tough, the mysterious caller from just now had cast a grim shadow upon her life in Japan.

“Is that your phone?”

“Mmm...”

Judging by the display, it was coming from within the city, though she did not recognize the number.

“Not picking it up?”

“I have a bad feeling about this.”

The phone kept ringing, though, so Emi had no choice but to answer.

“...Hello?”

『Ah— Is this Yusa Emi-san’s cell phone?』

Emi’s tension dissipated. This voice was different from the previous one. It sounded like a kindly middle-aged man.

“Yes, that’s right. May I know who this is?”

The answer she received was not what she had expected.

『Sorry to disturb you, but I’m from Yoyogi Police Station.』

“Ah?”

Emi waited impatiently in the reception lounge, her brows etched deeply into her youthful forehead, as though someone had carved them in there with a knife.

She was clearly unhappy about this, and she radiated her displeasure. Even the policewoman at the reception desk shrank away in alarm.

“Sorry for the wait.”

At long last, a uniformed police officer arrived at the waiting lounge to greet Emi. Unfortunately, Emi was not in the mood for such pleasantries.

“Sorry for making you come all this way, but this is a vital procedure.”

“Mm.”

“Now than, sorry for the inconvenience, but if you could show us your ID... good. Then, please fill in your name and address on this form, and then put your stamp here...”

I can't use anything besides my supplementary bank card, why did I bring along my health insurance card and my stamp...

Emi signed like she was going to tear the paper, inked her stamp like she was trying to gouge a chunk out of the inkpad, and then stamped down like she was trying to stab through the table.

While it was unclear whether the police officer understood Emi's feelings, he smiled cheerfully to the end— like a police officer ought to treat a good citizen— even after he saw the mood she was in.

“Alright, that takes care of the bail procedures. Maou-san and Ashiya-san are waiting in another room. You can go back with them if you wish. Of course, we'll contact you if anything happens.”

“As if I wanted to go back with them!” Emi growled at the police officer between clenched teeth.

“Ahh~ Sorry about that. You were the only one I could think of.”

“In truth, I did not want to beg a favor of you.”

Maou and Ashiya spoke thus— with no shame whatsoever— at the doors of the police station.

“I was scared to death when the cops showed up at the apartment. I didn't know you could find out one's address from a bike. The Japanese police are really something.”

“Still, it would seem you meddled with your age as I expected, Hero.”

“I told you before, didn’t I? Minors can’t rent a house without consent from a guardian and two guarantors. So she must have done something to bluff her way past the authorities and registered herself as being over 20. Still, when people lie about their age, don’t they usually do so to make themselves look younger?”

“Now that you mention it, why do they call it lying about your age?”

“Ahhhh, who cares!” Emi interrupted with a shout, which made Maou cover his ears and cringe slightly.

“Why... uuu, why... why did I... I...”

Emi trembled with anger.

“Why does the Hero have to serve as a guarantor for the Demon King and his lackey?!”

“Y-you idiot! You’re being too loud!”

Maou tried to ward off the stares from all around with an appeasing smile even as he hustled Emi out of the police station.

“It couldn’t be helped! I couldn’t think of anyone else!”

“We could have asked Store Leader Kisaki from MgRonald’s to help, but there’s a chance that the Demon King might have been sacked for being involved with the police, even if he was the victim.”

“Haa, while Kisaki-san’s not that sort of person, I just don’t want to make trouble for her.”

Of course, Emi did not swallow their explanations. Besides, if she did take the Demon King’s word at face value, could she even call herself a Hero?

“What the hell! So you mean making trouble for me is fine, then?!”

“Well, ah, the Demon King is kind of expected to cause problems for the Hero.”

Who the hell do you think you are?! Emi scratched her head in frustration.

“Why do you have my number, anyway? Did you peek at my phone last night?”

“As if! Didn’t we have to give our phone numbers when they dragged us to the police post?”

“Even if that was the case, what made you look me up, anyway?”

“I told you, we had nobody else to turn to. It couldn’t be helped, we don’t have any other friends either. Come on, does it really matter? We did let you spend the night at our place.”

“Nggk~!”

“Say, is that your work uniform? Hah, the Hero as an office lady, now that’s interesting.”

“That’s none of your business!”

Emi pulled the bowtie off her uniform and grabbed her head.

“Calm down, Emilia. As the Hero, this is quite unbecoming of you.”

“You’re the last person I want to hear that from, Alciel! It’s the beginning of the month; what’s with that empty fridge of yours? And you call yourself the top strategist of the Demon Army? Can’t you plan your spending better?”

“Ngk!”

Alciel suddenly keeled over for no reason, as though he had taken a fatal injury. He mumbled something along the lines of, “But it’s not my fault~”

“You two had better watch yourselves! I got a threatening phone call at work today! The enemy is also targeting the Demon King! Don’t let your guard down!”

“Say what?”

Emi ignored Maou’s answer. She simply put her hands on her waist and thrust her chest out at them.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you! But don’t forget that I’m the Hero who’s going to defeat the Demon King and bring peace back to Ente Isla!”

“Look, I like your spirit, but *please* don’t forget that we’re in public!”

Maou was panicking, Alciel was crying in the fetal position, and Emi was pointing at Maou while spouting kindergartener-grade lines.

When Emi noticed how the police officers and other members of the public were staring coldly at them, she blushed red to the tips of her ears.

“In, in, in any case, you lot had better be careful! That’s all I have to say!”

“Thanks for the warning...”

Emi ignored Maou’s weak-sounding reply and strode off with handbag swinging, eager to flee the scene.

“So the enemy is aiming for us... and her? And he even called her.”

Maou helped up Alciel, who had been so thoroughly wrecked by Emi’s words that he could not even stand up on his own again.

“Oi, pull yourself together, Ashiya!”

“It... it wasn’t my fault... my book-keeping was perfect...”

“Get a grip! Anyway, I’m going back first. I’ll be going out with Chichan later.”

“Dammit, I wasted my precious day off because of the police!”

“What’s so bad about that? They even fixed the tire for us free of

charge.”

Maou had been complaining ever since he had taken his bicycle back and pushed it home from the police station.

Though he had been taken in for questioning, the police did not treat him as a suspect, but instead considered him to be a victim.

His reason for abandoning the bicycle on the road– though it was humiliating for a Demon King– was:

“I was scared, so I dumped it and ran.”

After hearing that explanation, even the investigating officer began to feel for him. It was shameful, after all.

The two of them returned to their apartment, and began discussing the problem which remained.

The night when Emi stayed over, the texts from Chiho and the mysterious sender, and the earthquakes were all connected.

Maou had replied to both messages, but there had been no response from the mysterious sender. Instead, Chiho had sent back a somewhat confused and panicked text that read, “It’s not a joke or a fantasy, there really *was* an earthquake! - Chiho”

For some reason, every text she sent was signed “Chiho” and was followed by several emojis.

After that, they exchanged several more texts. They went along the lines of “there might be a big earthquake soon” and “I want to share what I think”. Maou concluded that he would need to speak to her directly to get her point, so he arranged to meet Chiho the next evening.

“Did Sasaki-san say anything useful in the end?”

“She said she heard a voice.”

“Ah?”

“It sounded like a man’s voice. It seemed to be giving her a strange

warning.”

“What does that mean? It’s not like this is an anime or manga—how would an average high school girl be so fortunate as to pick up on telepathy from somewhere?”

“I thought Chi-chan was having some sort of teenage delusion myself,” Maou smiled bitterly.

“And while this might make it sound even worse, Chi-chan said they started after she began working at McGonald’s.”

“In other words, these strange incidents took place after she came into contact with you, Demon King-sama. Is that right?”

“When you put it that way, I feel kind of uncomfortable. But yes, that’s a valid interpretation. First, she said she’s been hearing a ringing in her ears, and then there’s the earthquakes at Chi-chan’s house. Appearances aside, I *am* still the King of the Demon Realm, no?”

“Let’s include appearances as well, but yes, you do look the part.”

“...So logically speaking, my very existence should affect all life forms around me, right? I am the Demon King, after all.”

If a clueless bystander was listening, they would conclude that Maou was the delusional one instead.

“So why haven’t the other employees been affected?”

“Who knows? Maybe they haven’t noticed, or maybe Chi-chan’s mistaken. But I was attacked by those demonic magic bolts recently and Emi got that threatening phone call too, right? While we don’t know who our enemy is, they might well be researching our situation before applying pressure on the people around us. In the worst-case scenario...”

“Sasaki-san might be an enemy spy?”

“I don’t want to think that. In any case, we can’t rule out any possibilities yet.”

“I understand. But... well, if that’s the case, let me go with you. If this has something to do with the person who attacked you last night, then it would be better to have more people looking out.”

“You say that, but in truth you just want to see Chi-chan, don’t you?”

Maou nudged Ashiya with a wicked grin on his face. Ashiya merely turned up his nose with a snort.

“Hmph. If I didn’t keep an eye on you, I’m sure you’d forget that we’re flat broke and treat Sasaki-san to all sorts of things to look good in front of her, Demon King-sama. Also, if anyone does show up, they must be dealt with swiftly. How could I allow anyone to say, ‘The Demon King Satan is going on a date with a high school girl’, hm?”

In the face of such unassailable logic, even the great and mighty Demon King Satan could only remain silent.

“Then, when is this date, and when do you plan to return?”

“Are you my mother or something?! She said she has club activities today, so I’m meeting her at five at the Shinjuku Station east exit!”

“There’s still a bit of time, it seems. Then, let’s go, Demon King-sama!”

“Ah?”

Maou had no idea why Ashiya was so eager to rush out again after having just reached home.

“We are going shopping and to get you a haircut. You *are* the great Demon King Satan, are you not? Don’t tell me you plan to go on a date wearing UNIXLO and with a head full of unkempt hair?”

“My hair and clothes should be fine. I’ll be leaving after listening to her and having a cup of tea! There’s no need to go to such expense...”

“However serious their problems are, girls of her age will only share them with their friends. Not even their parents will hear about them. And she is willing to share them with *you*, Demon King-sama. Do you know what that means?”

There was no way he could not know after Alciel had said that much.

“I-I know that. Of course.”

“Wonderful. I would hate for my lord to be taken for a blundering boor by a mere human maiden. I pray you will maintain your dignity at all times. Even your attire must reflect your stature and ambition. Clothes make the man, after all.”

With that, Ashiya stylishly strode out the door. Behind him, Maou shouted:

“Apologize to the UNiXLO, the fastest-growing brand in the fashion industry, and me!”

The customer service center where Emi worked provided service until five in the afternoon on weekends and public holidays, so she would be done for the day in another 30 minutes.

After going to all that effort for Maou and Ashiya during her lunch break, she had been listless for the rest of the afternoon. Her face was such that even her neighbor Rika was worried that she was not feeling well.

“Hey, you want to go back early and rest?”

“...Mm, I will.”

“I don’t know what happened with you, but cheer up!”

“Thanks...” Emi replied in a tired voice.

After Rika sent her off, Emi entered the press of humanity that was Shinjuku, where she was jostled non-stop from all sides.

Why did she have to suffer the tragic fate of serving as a guarantor for her enemy? The ebb and flow of society had resulted in herself and the Demon King being linked on quite a few pieces of official documentation.

What an utter disgrace!

Emi typically took the Keio-Inokashira line from the Shinjuku Station west exit. If she took the tunnel from the east exit, she would not have to contend with the throng of people and traffic lights, so Emi typically took the underpass. However, the escalator which led downwards looked like a passage into hell.

“...I’ve had it.”

Therefore, when she stepped into the tunnel and saw someone spying on the surrounding shops and restaurants, she had half a mind to let the other party off on account of how tired she was. However, when she thought about it, she realized that doing so would only further damage her pride as a Hero. After scolding herself for her weak will, Emi walked up to the person’s back and tugged hard on his shoulder.

“What are you doing here, Ashiya?”

“Uooh!”

Alciel’s human form was easily a head taller than anyone on the street.

“E-E-E-Emilia...”

“I’m Yusa Emi! Are you getting careless, actually addressing me by my true name in front of others? Huh, Ashiya-san?”

“Er, uu,” Ashiya mumbled, his face a jumble of emotions.

“You look pretty suspicious. Are you following someone?”

“Ggk!”

Ashiya’s face froze up even more.

“Ara, did I hit the nail on the head? If that’s true, then it’s a good case the police didn’t question you.”

Emi had spotted Ashiya because he had been clumsy enough to hide behind a pillar and poke only his head out to look around. Even kids playing hide-and-seek would have done better.

“It, it’s none of your business! Get lost!”

Judging by Ashiya’s panic, this must have been a pretty bad situation for him. Emi’s instincts told her to dig in, and so she replied, “Ara, is that something you should be saying to your guarantor, hm?”

“Damn you! Give you an inch and you take a mile!”

“Demons really are an ungrateful lot. That aside, do you really think I could let you two go after seeing you?”

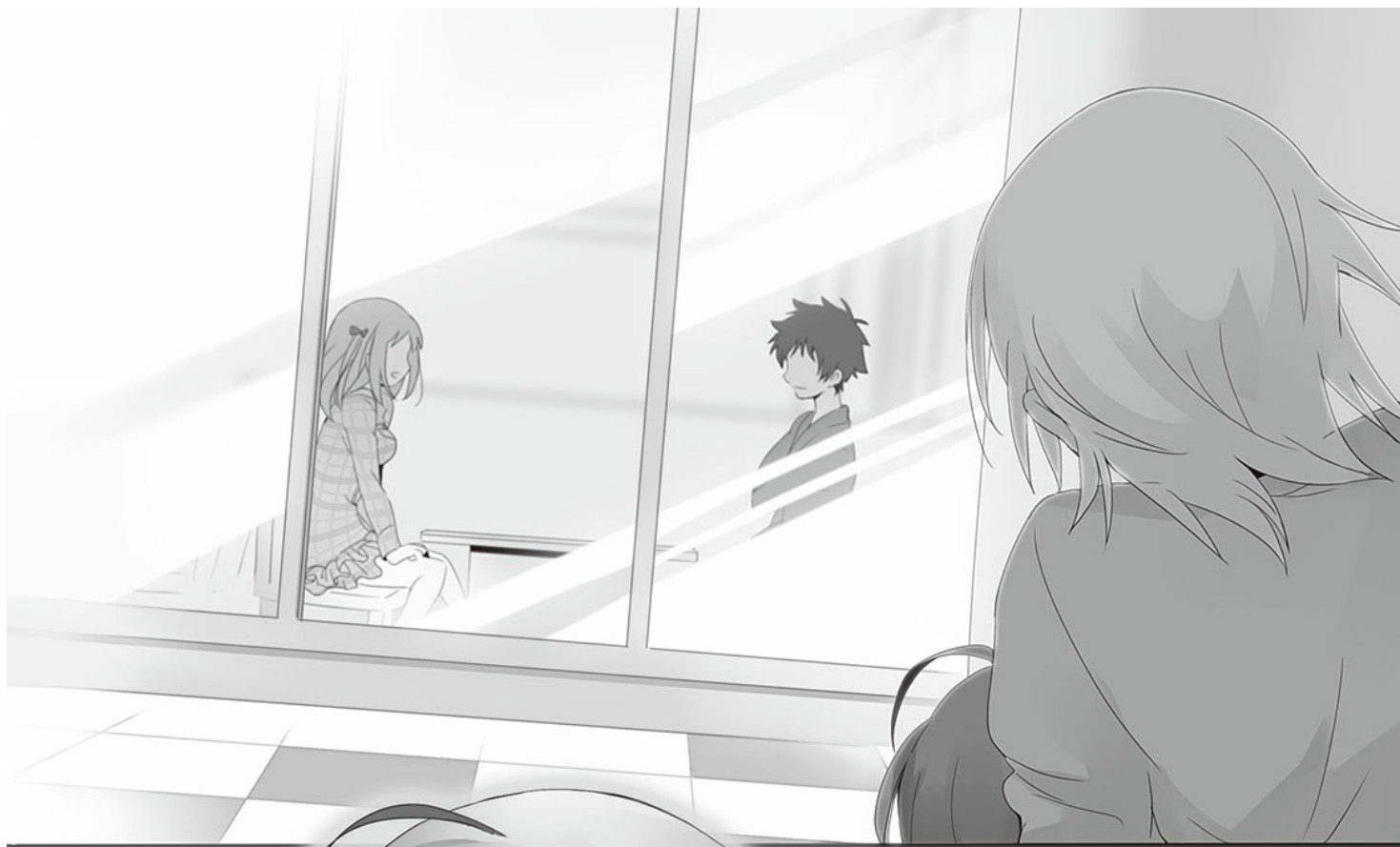
“I don’t think so, but I hope you’ll let us off this time round, for my sake.”

“I still remember how you flapped your jaws at me when you were a demon. Give *you* a break? For *your* sake?”

Emi decided to ignore Ashiya, and looked in the direction where he was spying.

“Ah! Oi, oi!”

After pulling the panicked Ashiya back and looking around, she realized that she could see the front of a small cafe. It was a ubiquitous franchise coffee outlet, but seated at the table near one of the outside windows was...



“Oi...”

Emi drew in a breath.

“Ahhhhhhh, Demon King-sama, I have failed you...” Ashiya sighed behind her.

“A-A-Alci... Ashiya! What’s going on here?!”

“How should I know? Go figure it out yourself!”

“Figure it out? What should I think of this?!”

Truly, it was a shocking scene. Maou, and the high-schooler called “Chi-chan” who worked with him at MgRonalds, were speaking intimately to each other in a cafe! They looked like a pair of lovers on a date, no matter how you sliced it. Maou seemed to have transformed himself into a model who had walked straight off the pages of a fashion magazine. Even those variety television shows rarely showed such a huge contrast between before and after.

“You, you two!”

“What, what of it?”

Emi’s expression when she snapped her head back was so malevolent that Ashiya reflexively backed a step away from her.

“What are you two planning to do to that girl, you scumbags!”

“Scum...!”

It was hard to imagine that such coarse language could have fallen from the lips of Emi, who was both a girl and the Hero. Ashiya was stunned into inaction.

“To think a demon like you and the Demon King would take such a cute high-school girl out on a date, and then go on to spy on her! You really are perverts!”

“Perverts... E-Emilia... no, wait, Yusa! Please, listen to me...”

“I can’t believe how stupid I was for actually thinking the two of you were living your lives correctly in Japan!”

“This, this is a misunderstanding! I don’t know what you’re thinking, but Demon King-sama isn’t doing this out of ill intentions...”

“Since when has there been a Demon King who *doesn’t* have ill intentions?!”

Emi’s words were right on the mark.

“Please, just listen to me!”

On the verge of tears, Alciel quickly narrated the details to a furious Emi.

Swearing on his honor as a demon, he explained that the high school girl was called Sasaki Chiho, that she was Maou’s kouhai at his workplace, and that she wanted to discuss some things with Maou. Maou had decided to talk to her about her troubles in the hopes of finding a way to recover his demonic magic, and he had no intentions of harming her.

Emi was not going to take Ashiya’s words at face value, of course, but at the very least she had abandoned the notion of charging in to smite the Demon King on the spot.

“Do, do you understand now?” Ashiya asked nervously, sneaking peeks at her.

“What I understand is that my archenemy is now in a very disgraceful state.”

“Uuu... I’m so embarrassed...”

“Didn’t I apologize for that just now? Still, did they really have to go on a date? A phone call or text would have worked for a discussion, right?”

“I felt the same way too. But she wanted to talk face-to-face, so it couldn’t be helped. Unfortunately, it seems that Sasaki girl has feelings for the Demon King.”

“I guess.”

“Erk, don’t you think so too?”

This was a big matter to Alciel, as one of the Archdemons, so he was simply surprised that Emi seemed unaffected by it. Yet, for some reason, Emi glared at him.

“Are you unhappy that I don’t think so?”

“No, no, that’s not what I meant... I simply feel that it’s far too presumptuous for a mere human girl to dare admire Demon King-sama...”

“I for one am wondering why such a cute girl would like a useless bum like Maou.”

“You, you dare badmouth Demon King-sama?!”

“I *am* the Hero, you know. Anyway, that aside, it’s obvious enough to a girl. It’s hard to tell from this distance, but she seems to be wearing the trending summer fashion, her hair looks like it’s been styled, and even her shoes are new.”

“W-what? Is, is that so...”

Ashiya had been stalking them for over half an hour, but he had not noticed any of those details.

“Men wouldn’t get it. The fabric shows off the coolness of early summer, the form-fitting cut highlights the body’s curves...”

Suddenly, Emi fell silent, staring at Chiho through the window. She unconsciously muttered to herself.

“What’s wrong, Yusa?”

“...They’re pretty big.”

Emi placed her hand on her chest without thinking.

“What’s very big?”

Emi only came to her senses after hearing Ashiya’s baffled words.

“Eh? No-nothing! So what if they’re big, they’re not practical during combat!”

“Oh?”

“If, if they’re smaller, they don’t get in the way, and breastplates are cheaper to make!”

“...What are you on about?”

“Nothing! More importantly, the Demon King’s human form looks pretty presentable. He’s not wearing his usual UNIXLO outfit, and it looks pretty good.”

Emi decided to forcibly redirect the conversation to shift attention away from herself. While Ashiya was surprised at Emi’s reaction, he was pleased to hear his master being praised, and he puffed his chest out.

“I picked those out for him. After all, we can’t have a mere human girl thinking of my master’s casual attire as tacky. I’ve even sneaked a few odd jobs to raise money for such occasions.”

Emi felt so weak that she nearly dropped her handbag.

“...Then? How did it turn out? What did you learn from that girl’s words?”

“As if I’d know. I was just following from behind to see if there was anyone suspicious.”

“Currently, *you’re* the one who looks the most suspicious. Since you’re a demon, shouldn’t you be able to hear what they’re saying in the cafe?”

Alciel was one of the Demon King’s Archdemons. Given that Emi knew his true identity, it was a natural assumption to make. However—

“Don’t be silly. Demons’ supernatural attributes stem from demonic magic. How could I manifest that monstrous hearing without it?”

Emi stopped listening to Alciel’s self-deprecation halfway through and began to think.

Currently, she had not found a way to replenish her own holy magic. If the demons found a way to regain their demonic magic, things would be very bad. Even now, while they had not yet recovered their strength, Emi had her doubts about whether she could take them down.

Even so, there was no point eliminating Maou now. She might not have enough strength left to deceive the bureaucracy of this country, let alone return to Ente Isla.

Unlike Ashiya, Maou still had enough demonic magic left for Emi to identify him as the Demon King. In addition, he might be hiding the true extent of his reserves of demonic magic.

That being the case, there was only one thing she could do.

That would be to deal with the danger in front of her. In other words, once the demons found a way to regain their demonic magic, she should take the initiative and destroy them. It smacked of treating the symptoms rather than the disease, but it was better than watching and doing nothing.

“Ashiya?”

“W-what?”

“There’s no point spying from here. Follow me.”

“Follow you... to where?”

“To the cafe where they’re at, obviously. If you’re suspicious of that girl, how can you call yourself a stalker if you don’t sit nearby to eavesdrop on her and watch the surroundings?”

“What, what are you saying?! How am I going to explain such an audacious act to Demon King-sama... Oi, hang on!”

After supplying some logically suspect reasoning, Emi grabbed a reluctant Ashiya by the lapels and dragged him into the cafe.

Half an hour before Emi discovered Ashiya, the great Demon King

Satan met his kouhai– a high school girl called Sasaki Chiho– in front of the Shinjuku ARITA.

“Eh? Chi-chan, did you cut your hair?”

“Mmm, I decided to trim it! How does it look?”

Maou noticed those small changes because he often supervised her as she worked, but he had no idea how much determination such a decision required. However, he had only seen Chiho in her school uniform or her McDonald’s uniform, so both her flowing dress and the way she let her hair down looked new and fresh to him.

“Ah, it suits you very well.”

“Wonderful!”

Chiho made a V-for-victory sign.

“Still, I thought you’d come in your school uniform. Didn’t you have club activities today?”

Maou asked that question without putting much thought into it. Chiho pouted in displeasure, though she still kept up the V sign.

“How could I wear my uniform here?! I mean, it’s rare enough that I could have tea with you, Maou-san! I’d never wear that ugly uniform for such an occasion! Besides, if I went around Shinjuku in my uniform while walking with a man, they might send me for counselling!”

Maou was surprised by Chiho’s seemingly angry outburst, because he had seen Chiho coming to work in her school uniform. He did not think it was *that* ugly.

“But the same goes for you, Maou-san. I thought you only wore UNIXLO, so how come you’re dressed so well today?”

Maou knew she meant nothing by it, but for some reason, it irked him.

“That’s because my flatmate told me that I shouldn’t wear UNIXLO

on a date.”

“UNIXLO isn’t that bad, it’s just that you need to coordinate your outfit if you’re wearing the same brand for everything. But that means he thought we were on a date! All right!”

What are you so happy about? What’s wrong with UNIXLO? And is this really a date?

With no idea what was going on, all Maou could do was nod slowly.

“Still, do you need to go back before dinner?”

“Mmm, well, that’s true...”

Chiho did not seem too happy as she nodded. Still, she was a high school girl, after all, so she had to accept that fact of life. Maou also knew that very few high school girls would be gallivanting around Shibuya and Harajuku until very late.

“So what did you have in mind? While I don’t quite like the idea of standing outside and talking, I rarely eat out, so the only place I can think of for us to rest is McGonald’s.”

Chiho had probably anticipated that as well, so she did not add anything. After some thought, she replied:

“Then, shall we go to a Raging Flow cafe ¹? Not only is it cheap, but the ambience is quite relaxing.”

All Maou knew about Raging Flow was that it existed.

“Don’t worry, I asked you out for a discussion, so everything’s on me!”

Maou typically radiated an obvious aura of poverty, so Chiho had probably said what she did to be polite. However, Maou had his pride—both as an adult and as the Demon King—to consider.

“Don’t look down on grown-ups! Giving you a treat is nothing for me.”

It had turned out exactly as Ashiya had envisioned.

“Then let’s go.”

They walked along Yasukuni Avenue for a while before heading underground, and from there they found the nearest Raging Flow within a food street.

“Ah... Ma-Maou-san.”

“Hm?”

Chiho called out to Maou, who was walking ahead of her.

“Er... ah...”

“Hm? What’s wrong?”

“...Hand.”

“Hand?”

Chiho lowered her head. She seemed to be blushing and biting her lip. For a moment, Maou thought Chiho was going to shout, and then she said something very unexpected.

“Can I... hold... your hand?”

She had been so spirited earlier, but now her voice was like a mosquito’s buzzing. It baffled Maou.

“Like this? Sure.”



Maou casually grabbed Chiho's right hand. The shock of surprise made her tense up.

"What's wrong?"

"Eh? Ah, no, it's good. It's great! Ah, it, it's nothing! Thank you..."

"There's a lot of people here, right? If we don't do this, we might get separated."

"Uu..."

Maou still had no idea what Chiho was thinking until now. Her expression changed like a movie screen, from surprise, to delight, to blankness, and then she looked like she was watching something open, all in a kaleidoscopic display of emotion.

"...Yeah. That's right. I knew that."

Maou studied Chiho's face. She wanted to keep her distance from Maou and his wide-open eyes, but due to their joined hands, she could not do so. In the end, she could only twist herself away from him.

"Is something wrong with you today, Chi-chan?"

"That, that must be because I'm worried!"

Chiho looked away in a very unnatural manner and walked forward, dragging Maou after her.

"Yeah, that's right."

Maou had actually taken it at face value.

"Haa..."

Maou did not miss Chiho's sigh, so full of complex emotions. He carefully inspected her.

First, he checked to make sure if Chiho had any traces of demonic magic influence on her. There did not seem to be any problems with her in a biological sense, and if there was anything wrong with Chiho, Maou ought to be able to pick it up, using his remaining

demonic magic as the Demon King. Still, even with direct physical contact, he could not detect anything.

The only thing that counted as a change was that the hand he was holding felt warmer than his body, and her pulse was somewhat quicker than usual.

That being the case, he had to consider the possibility that someone was externally interfering with Chiho. It might be the person who attacked Maou and Emi, or a completely unrelated demonic magic phenomenon might have affected Chiho.

Of course, all those theories were founded on the presumption that Chiho was telling the truth.

In any case, he had not noticed anything else suspicious, so all he could do was listen to what she had to say.

At the east exit of the Shinjuku Station, the shopping streets radiated from the JR Shinjuku Station. They descended via the nearest staircase. Since this was between the hours of afternoon and evening, there were not many people on the food streets.

Fortunately, there were still spaces open at Raging Flow. Maou chose a window seat so Ashiya could get a better view, but it was still difficult to directly observe them since it was an underground shop.

He could see Ashiya spying on them from behind a nearby pillar.

“Then, while this might be a bit sudden, I hope you can tell me about your situation in detail, Chi-chan.”

“Ah, yes.”

Chiho ordered a season-limited frozen latte, while Maou ordered a blended coffee. After that, they launched into the main topic.

“I think I’ve told you before, but the ringing in my ears has been getting worse ever since I started working at McGonald’s. At first I thought it was because of stress since I wasn’t used to working, but

you, Kisasi-san and the others have been really nice to me, and I haven't met any weird customers, and I don't have problems in school, so I guess there's something wrong with me."

As Chiho told Maou about her condition, he kept an eye on the surroundings and Chiho herself.

"Also, I mentioned that the earthquakes are particularly strong around my house, right? It confused me, but at night, I heard a voice speaking into my ear even though there was nobody there."

"What did that voice sound like? Did it feel like how we're talking normally now?"

Chiho cupped her chin with her hand in a thinker's pose.

"Hm— Maou-san, do you usually watch movies or anime?"

"..Sometimes."

The truth was that Maou had hardly seen them because he had no television at home, but he decided to play along so the conversation could continue.

"Isn't there a way of expressing yourself like telepathy? It felt like I heard an echo. Something like that."

"Eh?"

Chiho laughed quietly, as though she had suddenly recalled something.

"It felt like an uncle's voice— he was worried, but also very manly. It also felt like someone had not tuned a broadcast properly, so you could directly hear it with your ears."

"Really?"

"Mhm..."

Chiho nodded with some surprise because Maou had unconsciously leaned forward.

"Also, he kept repeating himself. Something like, 『Ahhh - can you

hear me?』 or something like that.”

Under normal circumstances, hearing a strange male voice in one’s ear would be a very frightening thing, but Chiho seemed to have listened calmly to it.

“I replied to him before I realized what I was doing, but after that I still kept hearing 『Can you hear me?』 so I guess my voice didn’t reach him. I figured that it couldn’t be helped, so I decided to listen to what he had to say. After that, he said 『Well, I’ll try to explain this to you since there’s only a few people who can hear this. There ought to be commonly-occurring natural phenomena in your world, and they might be getting worse soon. You should be careful. We’ll be heading to your side, depending on the circumstances.』”

Chiho paused to take a drink from her latte after saying all that.

“...That’s it?”

“That’s it. I don’t know what it means. Maybe it was something like dialling a wrong number. The only thing I was sure about was that it wasn’t meant for me, so I tried to think thoughts like, 『You’ve got the wrong person, you’ve got the wrong person』. In the end, the voice got softer and softer, like it was tuned to the wrong frequency, and after that my ears stopped ringing.”

“And then, on the topic of commonly-occurring natural phenomena... doesn’t that sound like earthquakes to you?”

“I spent some time before I thought of earthquakes. After all, I was startled to hear that voice, so I couldn’t think straight for a while.”

Chiho smiled bitterly, and took another sip of the latte, whose ice was starting to melt.

Opposite her, Maou paid no heed to his cooling coffee as he sank into thought.

The voice Chiho had heard ought to be a form of mental communication called an “Idea Link”. That was a communication technique which synchronized one’s thoughts with specific

individuals from another world who did not speak the same language. Once consensus was attained, they could understand each other in their respective languages.

In truth, when Maou and Ashiya had first come to Japan, they did not properly understand Japanese. They had simply used demonic magic to produce an Idea Link, converting the Japanese terms and concepts into a form they could understand.

Anyone who could pass through a Gate to another world would be able to use a detection technique called Sonar. It relied on triggering an invisible explosion of mana and analyzing the reflected mana wavelengths, but the physical manifestation of this mana explosion could take many different forms depending on the location in which it was triggered.

From this, one could deduce that this “Sonar” manifested as earthquakes on Earth, or at least in Japan.

The source of the Sonar pulse should be the assassins from Ente Isla who were hunting for him. It was simple coincidence that the demonic magic explosion occurred near Chiho’s home. The chances of that were low, but not impossible. The result of that was a localized earthquake at Chiho’s home.

By following the paths of the Demon King, Alsiel and the Hero, one could work out the target of the Sonar pulse.

Speaking of which, the earth had shaken during the night on which he and Emi had been attacked. Perhaps the attacker had been hiding nearby to launch a close-range Sonar pulse and observe Maou’s demonic magic reaction.

Things were developing faster than he had expected.

Maou and Ashiya might be similar to Japanese people in terms of appearance and life force, but they were fundamentally demons. More to the point, their unknown enemy was drawing closer.

What Chiho had heard about “they might be getting worse soon”

implied that someone with an equal amount of power was planning to make their entrance.

The enemy was hiding nearby, waiting for their chance.

“Still... I’m glad I could talk to you, Maou-san.”

“Eh?”

Lost in contemplation, Maou was only brought back to reality by Chiho’s voice.

“Thank you for believing me.”

“Don’t worry. Think nothing of it.”

“It’s not nothing! Most adults wouldn’t take this sort of thing seriously! Frankly speaking, when I sent you those messages, I was worried that you would dislike me, Maou-san. I was actually a little scared because of that.”

“Really? How about your parents and friends?”

“I don’t think I could tell them, right? A high-schooler talking about this sort of thing would go past being merely laughable and reach the level where people were concerned. They’d surely think, ‘can this girl differentiate between fantasy and reality’ or something.”

“Hm... really?”

Maou tried to speak kindly to Chiho, who looked somewhat depressed.

“If you just need a listening ear, you can come to me anytime you wa... arghakhack!”

“Are, are you alright? What happened?”

Chiho hurriedly brought a glass of water to Maou. As he gulped it down, Maou tried to confirm what his eyes were seeing, but the sight from the corner of his eyes made it hard for him to think clearly.

Why? Why had Alciel and Emi stepped into the shop together?

“Maou-san?”

“Cough, cough, uh, don’t worry. I just choked for a moment, it’s not like I did anything bad.”

“Eh?”

“Er, it’s fine. Discussing things with my kouhai is a normal daily activity, certainly not an unwholesome activity in and of itself.”

“Ma-Maou-san, are you alright?”

“Hm? Ah, Chi-chan, don’t worry about it. I was just acting up.”

“Ac-acting up?”

“The Central Rift Belt ², I mean.”

“Maou-san?”

“Er, ah, sorry, it’s nothing, really.”

His wild thoughts raced at the speed of light, circling the earth seven and a half times. When he realized he was on the other side of the planet, they went halfway around the world again.

“In, in any case, after listening to what you said, Chi-chan, I feel that your ears ringing and that strange voice aren’t the important thing. Rather, what’s important is whether or not something bad is really going to happen. In short, whether or not the ‘getting worse’ part is going to happen.”

Though Chiho was left speechless by Maou’s strange antics, she still managed to nod at his serious words.

“Fortunately, that chap who made your ears ring didn’t seem to have ill intentions when making contact with you. I think the important thing is to warn the others around you during a critical situation.”

“Mm... yes.”

“Although I don’t feel like I actually helped you with anything,

that's all I can say for now."

Maou took another sip of ice water, as though to regain his tempo.

The ice in Chiho's latte had already melted after she held it in her hands to think. Eventually, she looked up again and said:

"Maou-san, thank you very much. I feel like a great weight's been lifted off my chest."

"Mm, that's good."

How about that, Emi! This might not exactly be in the Demon King's job description, but I haven't done anything weird! See what an excellent sempai and advisor I am?!

As pride swelled in his heart, Maou puffed up his chest.

"Speaking of which, why did you come to me about this matter?"

Maou brought up something he had thought up by chance to Chiho. While he was her sempai at work, they had known each other for less than two months. Also, she ought to understand how lowly-placed freeters were in Japanese society.

"Eh, ah..."

Chiho seemed shy, and her eyes wandered all over.

"Um, gee, I wonder. I guess it's because I thought you'd believe me, Maou-san. You're very kind, and you don't seem like an ordinary person either."

Could the word "gentle" be considered praise to a demon, Maou thought. Also, it was true that Maou the Demon King was not an ordinary person.

"Well, it can't be helped. I *am* an odd one, after all."

"Ah, ahhh, it's not like that, I didn't mean anything bad by that."

For some reason, Chiho seemed very nervous. Maou smiled at her innocence.

"I know. Look, your drink's almost spilling, don't be so nervous."

“Really! Maou-san, you’re surprisingly mean!”

Chiho coughed, with a look on her face that seemed somewhere between worry and anger.

“Still, I don’t mind an odd thing or two if I can have tea with you like this, Maou-san.”

“Eh?”

Were the words that leaked through Chiho’s radiant smile meant for herself or him? In any event, Maou knew that this was not a trivial matter.

“...Ma-Maou-san, I...”

Chiho’s voice trembled as she tried to force the words out. She seemed uncomfortable for some reason as she looked at Maou, her face flushed red.

“Maou-san, I...”

“Stop right there!”

Before Chiho could finish, a forceful voice interrupted her from the side.

Maou cringed at the sound of the voice, while Chiho had no idea what was going on and could only stare at the woman staring down at them from beside the table.

“No good will come of getting involved with this man!”

“E-Emi! You!”

“I’m not trying to harm you. This man is going to leave Japan soon. If you don’t stop now, you’ll only end up hurting yourself even more!”

Startled by Emi’s sudden intrusion, Maou’s mind briefly stopped functioning. Ashiya– who had been sitting with Emi and who was supposed to stop her– seemed to have been too slow, and so he sat frozen in place.

On the other hand, Chiho reacted much more quickly.

“Pardon me, but how are you related to Maou-san, onee-san?”

Chiho stood up, glaring at Emi. The wishy-washy look on her face was suddenly filled with power. Hostility surged through Chiho’s voice, shocking even Maou.

Emi maintained her severe expression, as though she understood Chiho’s sudden hostility. Then, she continued in a lecturing tone:

“Listen, I’m just saying this for your own good. This man is not what he appears to be. He’s cunning and cruel by nature.”

“Please don’t say such ridiculous things all of a sudden. Could you tell me how you’re related to Maou-san?”

Maou was quite surprised that Chiho was confronting Emi head on. He knew his kouhai was a cheerful girl, but he had not expected her to have such a strong will.

Incidentally, Ashiya was still panicking behind Emi.

“I am this man’s enemy. There’s nothing else between us. Listen, Sasaki Chiho-san. I’ve already warned you that getting involved with Maou will only lead to unhappiness for you.”

“Oi, oi, Yusa, stop!” Ashiya finally managed to cut in from behind Emi.

“Chi-chan, you too, please calm down,” Maou said as he tried to soothe Chiho.

“Don’t tell me what to do!”

“Maou-san, please don’t interrupt!”

Sparks seemed to fly between the two girls. They had no intention at all of interrupting their silent duel.

“Er, if this keeps up, we’ll be making trouble for the store. Let’s go outside and talk, okay?”

The other customers and the shop attendants looked in their

direction, having sensed the tension that came from between Chiho and Emi. For some strange reason, only Maou and Ashiya– the demons– seemed to be bothered by this. Maou tried to talk down the two of them, but–

“Oh yes, I seem to remember you came to our store once, onee-san.”

“...So what?”

The two of them ignored Maou’s efforts.

“I believe you wanted to speak to Maou back then as well. Could it be that you’re Maou’s ex-girlfriend?”

The corner of Emi’s mouth twitched for a second. Clearly, those words had an unexpectedly large impact on her.

“...Ngh! What, what did you say?!”

Chiho’s words had made Emi recall what had happened when she and Maou had been dragged to the police post together, and as she fought to hold back the anger and shame within her, she let a tiny grunt slip out. However, Chiho seemed to have taken this as a sign that she was on the mark.

“It’s just as I thought. That being the case, how close I am to Maou-san now shouldn’t matter to you, right?”

“Could you not speak such nonsense? I don’t have that sort of relationship with him...”

“Then why do you keep hovering around Maou-san?”

“The relationship I have with him can’t be explained in a couple of sentences.”

“Does that mean you’re close to Maou-san, then?”

“How did you take it that way?!”

“How else could I have taken it?!”

They were talking past each other, hardly listening to what the

other said, and it boosted the tension in the air to a fever pitch. Maou broke out in a cold sweat as the other customers directed icy glares his way, and with a stiff face he said:

“Could you two calm—”

However, Maou the would-be peacemaker could not get the word “down” out of his mouth.

A strange vibration filled the shop; it was like some kind of echo.

Maou, Chiho, Emi and Ashiya aside, the other customers in the cafe— who were focused on the tension between the four of them— had no idea what was going on.

And in the next moment—

“Earth–earthquake!” someone shouted.

“It’s a big one!”

Who had shouted after that?

The person calling out after that could not produce any words, because the tunnel suddenly began to shudder, and a thunderous rumbling drowned out anything anyone was saying.

Though they were underground, the back and forth shaking was such that people could hardly stand up. The cutlery and other eating utensils crashed to the ground, and the lightbulbs and cafe windows broke as well.

“Look out!”

The listeners and speakers saw a crack crawling along the ceiling.

The resonance and shaking continued, while the cracks on the ceiling unfurled like tentacles, reaching for the pillars and the ground.

“It, it’s going to fall...”

It looked like the ceiling above Maou and Chiho’s table was about to collapse.

“Maou-san!”

Chiho shouted with all her strength, but her voice could not reach Maou’s ears. Even as she saw the ceiling about to fall, her legs, frozen in terror as they were, could not take her away from the shaking.

The tunnel began to collapse. Debris fell like rain. Chiho’s fear became too much to bear, and her consciousness vanished into the darkness.

She felt that her eyes were open, but she saw nothing but blackness. Naturally, Chiho panicked.

She had never fainted before, but the memories before she had passed out were so vivid that they filled Chiho with terror. She nervously moved her stiff limbs, and felt what seemed like countless rocks and pieces of debris on them.

“What, what happened?” Chiho muttered unconsciously.

“Great, you’re awake.”

A woman’s voice came from beside her.

“Who, who is it?”

“It’s me.”

There was no echo, so she could not make out the voice in the darkness. However—

“You are...”

A blurred light suddenly appeared in the darkness. The face which appeared in it was that woman who had interrupted her teatime with Maou.

In the moment she recognized that woman, Chiho remembered their back and forth before the situation had ended up like this. However, when the light shone on her face, she could not help but

exclaim as she saw the black fluid flowing from around her forehead.

“Are, are, are you alright?”

“Oh, you mean this?”

The woman wiped at her forehead, but the liquid poured out again. Chiho was unable to contain the scream that came from the depths of her throat.

“It’s nothing.”

“But, but there’s a, a lot of blood...”

“It’s not as bad as it looks. It’ll stop by itself if you leave it.”

The other woman– who did not seem to care about her injury– was holding a cell phone. That seemed to be the source of the light. However, Chiho’s eyes were fixed on the bleeding part of her forehead.

“Still, this is pretty bad. We’ve been completely buried.”

The woman shone the light from her phone around her. The debris from the collapsed tunnel surrounded them, leaving barely enough space for Chiho and the woman to stand up.

“Did, did the earthquake do this?”

“Mm, the tunnel collapsed, and a lot of people were buried alive. Feels that way.”

“How, how long was I out?”

“It’s been less than 30 minutes since the collapse. However, we aren’t having breathing difficulties, so at least there’s airflow.”

Chiho gingerly moved her body, but she did not feel pain anywhere. Perhaps it was because of the woman’s level-headed attitude, but her fear of the dark was ebbing away, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

“You’re really calm.”

“It’s not that bad. This sort of thing used to be my bread and butter not too long ago. You’re one to talk– you’re plainly not accustomed to this sort of thing, but you’re pretty stable yourself, no?”

“I guess it’s because you’re here, onee-san. I’d probably cry if I was alone.”

Despite the circumstances, the woman managed a smile.

“My name’s Yusa Emi. Let me get this out of the way first– there’s nothing between me and Maou.”

“I’m Sasaki Chiho. Let’s leave it at that for now.”

The two of them shook hands. Chiho was quite surprised by how calm she was, given the circumstances. While part of it was because she had someone with her, she did not think she could be this strong just because of that.

“Maou-san...”

“Well, he’s not beside us, though I think he shouldn’t be too far away.”

“No, that’s not what I meant...”

Only a table had separated them before things had ended up this way. Yet, he was not around. That meant...

“Ah, you’re worried that he was squashed by the debris?”

Chiho was left speechless by how easily Emi could say something that was so difficult to bring up.

“Well, it’s true that it’d be good for me if he were to die here.”

Despite that comment, so passionate and heartless at the same time, the fact that she could say it so lightly meant that Emi did not actually feel that way.

“He’s definitely alive. How could he die in a place like this? I’m the one who’ll defeat him. I won’t allow him to die disgracefully like this, by being caught up in a disaster.”

Emi delivered her statement with the utmost certainty. For some reason, her confident tone instilled a measure of courage in Chiho as well.

“That’s right! He’ll definitely be safe!”

“Mm, he will.”

After saying that, Emi sat down beside Chiho. Now that they were certain of each other's' positions, Emi turned off her cell phone to save its battery, and darkness surrounded them once more.

“Speaking of which, don’t you think it’s strange?”

“What is?”

“This place. How come there’s a space here that’s just big enough for the two of us?”

“...Ah.”

Chiho had seen live reports from the scenes of natural disasters before. Those reports typically showed survivors who were unable to move and had to wait several days before they could be rescued. In contrast, she had not only survived, but even had enough room to move around. This was an abnormal phenomenon that went far beyond a miracle.

“There ought to be several other similar spaces in the debris. It looks like there’s a lot of small forcefields around here; this has to be Maou’s doing.”

“Forcefields?”

Chiho repeated the term she did not quite understand, but Emi disregarded her and continued.

“I doubt anyone died. Also, the furthest forcefield is within 50 meters, so the damage probably isn’t as bad as I imagined.”

Emi was not so much explaining the situation to Chiho as she was mumbling to herself.

“If that’s really the case, I’ll have to thank him. Still, I didn’t expect the Demon King to save so many people in an instant. What on earth is going on?”

“Maou-san?”

Chiho had not realized that Emi’s pronunciation of his name was slightly strange. |3|

“This space should be the Demon King’s work. I didn’t know he had enough demonic magic to create so many forcefields in an instant. I knew I couldn’t underestimate him.”

“You mean this place? Did Maou-san... really make this?”

“Yes, in order to save us. It really makes me mad– why does he, as a Demon King, have to save me, the Hero? Won’t this make me– a Hero who can’t instantly create a protective barrier of holy magic– look like the bad guy?”

Emi muttered those self-deprecating remarks in the darkness.

“Ah... I don’t quite understand what you’re saying, Yusa-san...”

“Don’t worry about it. I was just mumbling to myself.”

Emi seemed to be smiling bitterly

“What *do* you like about Maou, anyway?”

“Eh?”

Chiho jumped in the darkness upon being asked that question out of nowhere.

“Whatwhatwhatwhatwhat are you saying?!”

Though Emi could not see it, Chiho was waggling her hands non-stop.

“Didn’t you take offense at what I said and get mad at me because you liked Maou?”

“Butbutbut I don’t like him or anything!”

Chiho was really panicked now, waving her arms and legs around and making noise for about a minute or so.

“...Was, was it that obvious?”

Emi smiled bitterly as she heard what sounded like Chiho being driven to the verge of tears.

“You’re probably the only one who hasn’t realized it yet, huh? Any bystander could tell in an instant. Now whether Maou himself knows, I have no idea.”

“Uuu...”

Chiho felt her face boiling.

“Yu-Yu-Yusa-san, how do you see Maou-san?”

“Me?”

“You say Maou-san is your enemy, but you always follow nearby, like you’re actually pretty close to him.”

“...I don’t want to be close to him at all. Still, we *have* known each other for a long time.”

“About... how long is that?”

“I learned about him first, but he realised I existed around two years ago.”

“Did you graduate from middle school together?”

“If that were the case, we’d have a more normal relationship,” Emi grinned.

“Still, if you fall in love with him, he’ll leave you with bad memories. So I’d suggest you give up on him.”

“I don’t quite get your meaning...”:

“You’ll understand soon enough... no, it might be better if you didn’t know. In any case...”

With that, Emi pressed her fingertip to Chiho’s forehead in the

dark.

“You’d best take a nap for now. Recently, the Demon King’s been quite mindful of others’ eyes on him.”

In the next moment, the fingertip on Chiho’s forehead glowed dimly. When the light faded, Chiho was fast asleep.

Emi gently lay the sleeping Chiho on the ground.

“Sorry for making you listen to my pointless grumbling. By the time you wake up, you’ll have forgotten it all.”

With that, she placed her finger on Chiho’s head once more. Light flared around the fingertip once more, and then it vanished.

“Are you nearby? I’ve put Chiho to sleep.”

As though in response to Emi’s call, a surge of demonic magic swept out from the other side of the debris. Emi’s eyes went wide for a moment at the unexpected power of that demonic magic burst.

“Busybody.”

Maou’s voice rang out amidst the sound of debris falling. As the patter of fallen pebbles faded, a new presence appeared in the darkness.

“Now that I think about it, our relationship is pretty complicated.”

“Yup. It’s worse because neither of us wants to meet the other.”

“Indeed.”

Maou’s voice seemed to be coming from a higher location. Emi frowned, because Maou’s voice seemed to be laced with a mysterious power.

“I’m about to head out. Chi-chan’s all yours. The casualties were surprisingly light, but we can’t wait around for help to come.

A ray of light appeared in the darkness. That foreboding crimson radiance awakened Emi’s fear-filled memories.

“D-Demon King!”

“Now what?”

His reply was nonchalant, but–

“You– your appearance... what happened to it?!”

“Beats me. I suddenly became this way.”

While his face still belonged to “Maou Sadao”, there were demonic horns sprouting through his black hair. The one Emi had cut off was still in its damaged state.

The monstrous form that emerged from the darkness radiated an aura of demonic magic that was visible to the naked eye.

The reason why Maou’s voice sounded like it was coming from a higher place was because his legs had transformed into demonic forelimbs that no beast in this world could equal.

While he had only changed a little, Maou was clearly regaining his Demon King form.

“That’s why I could deploy all those forcefields. Right now, moving all this debris is a piece of cake for me. Still, you don’t have to worry. I don’t have enough power to control a Gate yet.”

As if I’d really relax when you tell me not to worry! For some reason, in the brief time following the collapse of the tunnel, Maou had regained the demonic magic needed to become the Demon King.

“Maintaining these forcefields and moving debris must be pretty tiring. Plus, I doubt you can explain away this form.”

Maou slowly infused his crimson power into the surrounding debris.

The Demon King Satan was currently using demonic magic to save Emi, Chiho, Ashiya, and other Japanese people that he did not know. If the Hero Emilia saw the Demon King exposing his back to her so carelessly, she would have drawn her holy sword without hesitation and cut him down. But Yusa Emi could only watch her nemesis’

defenseless back and do nothing.

The ominous flow of demonic magic weighed down on Emi, making her fear the eruption of demonic wings from Maou's back at any moment. If she took this opportunity and cast all thoughts of the future out of her mind, she could gather her remaining holy magic and manifest the holy sword which could defeat the Demon King of the present.

“Uu... hm.”

The quiet sounds of Chiho's slumber, and the mumblings which hardly qualified as sleep-talking, dispelled the faint bloodlust in Emi's heart.

She might well accomplish her objective if she killed the Demon King right now. However, the people who were alive thanks to the Demon King's power would be crushed to death by the debris in an instant, including Chiho and Emi.

“Why...”

An inaudible cry escaped from the depths of Emi's soul.

“Why is the Demon King helping mankind?”

The Demon Army had been fighting the forces of the Holy Church on Ente Isla ever since Emilia Justina was old enough to know about it.

Emilia grew up in a rural village on the Western Continent. Her father, Nord Justina, was a farmer. He grew wheat on a small plot to raise his only daughter. She had no relatives besides her father, and she had no memories of her mother.

When Emilia was 10, the demonic forces from the Central Continent swept across the kingdoms of the north and east like a tsunami.

The Western Continent was defended by the armies of the Holy

Church and the western kingdoms, but they were still ravaged by the merciless assaults of the Demon Army which was led by Archdemon Lucifer.

Her father Nord was a devout worshipper of the Holy Church, and he would take his daughter to church every day. The young Emilia did not understand the verses which the adults chanted, but she seemed to understand that something big was going on, and so she clasped her hands tightly in imitation of her father and prayed.

However, the gods did not hear Emilia's prayer, and the armies of the west slowly faltered before the offensive of the Demon Army.

The heralds ran about the village reporting grim tidings from the battlefield, and Emilia was constantly afraid of when scary monsters would attack her village and burn the fields she and her father had cultivated. Every night was dark and full of terrors for her.

Her father was a simple farmer. He was a man whose life was given to planting wheat and he did not know how to fight.

Whenever Emilia cried on her bed in fear, her father seemed to sense his daughter's discomfort and stroked her face with his rough hands until she could fall asleep.

Emilia loved her father. She respected him and trusted him more than anyone else in this world. He was the greatest hero in her heart.

And then, in the year when Emilia turned 12, fate touched her.

The domain of the noble which bordered the lands where Emilia lived fell under attack.

The priests of the Holy Church went to Emilia's home, as though they had been waiting for this to happen.

At first, Emilia thought the Church Knights had come to help her village.

However, her father urged Emilia to board the wagon by herself, indicating that he would be staying at their home.

At first, Emilia could not understand what her father meant. She had even asked the village chief who had come to send her off and the priest who had come to fetch her to persuade her father. She said, *I can't live alone by myself. I'm where I am because of Father and everyone in the village.*

“Papa, come with me! We'll go together!” Emilia shouted.

However, she could hardly believe what her father said next.

“Emilia, hurry up and go.”

She even doubted her ears.

“Papa! What are you saying, Papa...”

“I've been protecting you for this day, one which I prayed would never come. This was why I served as a father to an angel's child for twelve years. You would never have been entrusted to me otherwise.

“I don't understand! Papa, what are you saying?!”

“You are the daughter of an angel, the bearer of the celestial bloodline that can sweep away the darkness which covers Ente Isla. You are the only one strong enough to defeat the Demon King.”

“Me? No! I'm Papa's daughter! I'm a farmer's daughter!”

“Yes, you are. But at the same time, you are your mother's daughter— an angel's daughter.”

“My... mama? Was an angel?”

Her father maintained that her mother had passed away.

“You will understand someday, Emilia. Go with the priest-samas. Your mother should still be alive somewhere, watching over you all this time.”

“But, but Papa...”

“This is the promise I made with your mother. Someday, the three of us will live in this village, as a family. But we must fight in order to honor this promise.”

Emilia clung to Nord like a child. Nord hugged her tightly, and knelt down to meet her gaze before patting Emilia’s head with his rough hands.

“Don’t worry. The warriors of the Holy Church will fight to protect the village and this province. Someday, we will be able to live together again.”

“...Really?”

“Mm. I’ve never lied before, and I’ve never broken a promise I made to you, right?”

“...Mm.”

Emilia wiped away the tears in her eyes as she sobbed, and then she nodded.

“Good girl.”

Her father’s smile was warm enough to dry hay.

“I pray you will be able to live a bright and happy life in a world free of monsters. Emilia, my daughter, I love you from the bottom of my heart.”

Her memories after that were hazy. Her tears clouded her view of her father’s silhouette, and the arms of the priest kept her from her father. Looking out through the window of the wagon, she saw her father and her village shrink into the distance.

She must have cried herself to sleep, but when the girl woke up, she realized that she was in a luxurious room which she had never seen before.

The priest assigned to take care of her said that this was the headquarters of the Theocracy on the Western Continent– the Basilica of St. Ignoret.

That young priest told Emilia many things.

Emilia's mother was actually an Archangel, and only the mixed-blooded child of an angel and mankind could use the divinely gifted "Evolving Holy Sword - One Wing (Better Half)". That said, nothing the priest babbled about was important to Emilia.

There was no way a girl could accept someone suddenly telling her these unexpected things and insisting they had been true all along.

Emilia did not want a holy sword. Neither did she want news about her dubious mother. What she wanted was the strength to avenge herself on the Demon Army which threatened to destroy her peaceful little world.

The day after she arrived at St. Ignoret, Emilia immediately asked to be taught swordplay. She still could not forget the shocking weight of the swords which the adults swung with such ease. Just learning how to take a stance had covered her with bruises and filled her hands with blisters.

After a year had passed, she finally had the chance to take the field, joining the defenders at the border. Although she faced goblins, the least of the Demon Army and the main body of their troops, Emilia's first time seeing the battlefield and smelling gore frightened her so badly that her legs went weak. All she could do was accept the protection of the Church Knights, and in the end she could not even kill a single demon.

Emilia had finally experienced her own weakness, and how frightening the beings she intended to challenge truly were. The tears she had promised never to shed ever since she had lost her father leaked out of her.

After that, time passed, and Emilia became a veteran of the battlefields. Before she knew it, she stood on the frontlines, leading the Holy Church's Knights in attacks against the Demon Army's fortresses and bases.

The name of the Church Knight known as Emilia Justina did not just spread throughout the Theocracy's forces, but became famous among the knights of every kingdom and mercenaries of every stripe. She wore a suit of silver armor emblazoned with the gold and red badge of the Holy Church, carrying a shield in one hand and slaying demons with the symbol of the Holy Church— a knight's longsword shaped like the Cross of Ignora— with the other. For that, she was known as the “Battle Maiden” and the “Saint-Knight”, among other titles. Somewhere along the way, the name of Emilia became known to all, and became the symbol for the knights who battled the Demon Army.

Emilia also amassed many reliable comrades.

Olba Meyer, one of the Six Archbishops who were the highest-ranking clerics of the Holy Church. Emerada Etuva, Court Sorceress of the Empire of St. Aire, who had once been captured by Lucifer of the Western Continent. Alberto Ende, a sage who had once been a woodsman in the mountains of the Northern Continent.

Sometimes, the four of them worked together. At other times, they led individual army units against the Demon Army.

Then, on her 16th birthday, Emilia had grown into a warrior who could wield the holy sword. She implanted the “Evolving Holy Sword - One Wing (Better Half)” into her body, and thus gained the power to destroy the Demon King.

The Hero Emilia who wielded the holy sword of Heaven was born. This news spread swiftly throughout Ente Isla, revitalizing morale to those who had heard of the name of Emilia. The day when the Hero was born was also the day when the humans of Ente isla officially began to fight back against the Demon King.

Emilia calmly surveyed the situation before her. It was nothing to be complacent about, nor did it deserve any kind of grand ceremony. To her, that day had no special significance beyond marking the occasion when she had gained the strength to oppose

the Demon King.

Emilia only had her father's face in her heart, as well as her desire for vengeance against the darkness of the Demon Army. Her comrades sensed this, but continued serving as Emilia's sword and shield without saying anything, becoming her close companions who would fight and die with her.

They defeated three Archdemons with contemptuous ease, and after many fierce battles, they forced their way into the Demon King's Castle for the final showdown. She remembered the black glee that made her shudder when she had shattered a horn of the Demon King, and the blazing red anger which made her shake when the Demon King had escaped through the Gate which led to another world.

Ever since Emilia knew of war, she had lived for the moment of slaying the Demon King.

The surface was as busy as a kicked-over beehive.

Yasukuni Avenue was completely sealed off and over a dozen emergency rescue vehicles were parked at a distance from the site of the collapse, awaiting orders. Countless warning lights colored the cityscape at night with tension, and media vehicles surrounded the scene of the disaster.

By the time the rescue teams made it into the tunnels, Maou had already extracted all the victims from the debris. None of them had obvious external injuries, so the nervous rescue workers first ended up surprised, then confused.

The Demon King had resumed the appearance of Maou Sadao by the time the rescue was complete. Maou was hard-pressed to hide his fatigue, and he collapsed with the other victims. Given the circumstances, hardly anyone would be suspicious of him for doing so.

Of course, Maou did not tell the rescuers that he had saved everyone. Almost all the victims were conscious and mobile, and Emi– with her forehead wound– was arguably the most badly hurt of the lot.

Maou patted Chiho's face lightly, and the girl Emi had put to sleep woke up. Once she realized she was on the surface, and her senpai's face was beside her, she was at a loss for words.

“Haa. At least you're not hurt.”

“Y-yes...”

Maou patted Chiho's head, and though she felt a little uneasy about it, she smiled anyway. The rescue workers and police officers around them rushed over, indicating that the “rescuees” should move somewhere safe.

Chiho saw Yusa Emi being treated for her forehead wound in one of the ambulances. She tried to recall her conversation with Emi before passing out, but for some reason her memories of that time were hazy.

“Pardon me, but are the two of you rescued victims?”

A uniformed police officer appeared next to them, holding what looked like a notebook in his hand.

“Fortunately nobody was badly hurt. Would you mind leaving your contact information here? We need to verify the identity of the victims so we can pay out compensation and return lost belongings afterwards.”

The police officer handed the book over as he said that. There were several other names and addresses written inside already.

Maou obediently wrote down his name and address before handing the book to Chiho, who did the same thing.

“Eh? Aren't you Sergeant Sasaki's daughter?”

The policeman glanced back at the address Chiho had provided, as

though he had discovered something.

“If you mean Sasaki Senichi of the Harajuku police department, then yes, he is my father.”

Chiho seemed quite surprised as she answered, and the other party nodded as he heard the name.

“I see. Sergeant Sasaki’s been mobilized to maintain order as well. Since you’re underage, we’ve asked for someone to pick you up. We’ll inform him about this afterwards. I think it would be better for Sergeant Sasaki to hear from us that you’re safe, rather than learning through someone else that you were involved in an accident.”

“Ah, yes.”

Chiho nodded, and the policeman then picked up his walkie-talkie and started speaking. He was probably notifying Chiho’s father. Seeing that, Chiho suddenly began fidgeting in her seat.

“Ah, ah, Maou-san...”

Maou immediately sensed what Chiho was trying to say, so he smiled to put her at ease.”

“Ah, it’s about your father, no? I know, I know, it’ll be troublesome for you if he finds out that you got into an accident while you were on a date with some guy.”

“...I’m sorry,” Chiho apologized with the utmost sincerity.

“It’s fine, it’s fine. Fortunately we’re both safe. See you at work! I’ll teach you how to care for the soft-serve machine. See you, then.”

Chiho bowed to him, and Maou left her behind with a wave. He looked back after walking for a short while, and saw another police officer barrelling through the crowd to Chiho’s side.

“Ah!”

Maou could not help but exclaim as he saw that man. He was a familiar face.

On the night they had fled from Ente Isla, the person who had found the wounded Demon King and Alciel in a Yoyogi alley and brought them to the Harajuku police station was Chiho's father.

"Sergeant... Sasaki? Is that a coincidence? If he reacted to the demonic magic on our persons when we first arrived here..."

"Wait, Demon King!"

"Uwah!"

Emi had circled behind him without his knowledge, and her shouts brought the Demon King out of his thoughts and back to reality.

"Looks like you're Maou Sadao now."

She looked a bit like a ninja with her forehead wrapped in bandages, but Emilia was still sizing Maou up with the same razor-sharp gaze as always. Maou's horns had vanished, but his monstrous legs had burst through his jeans, and through them she could see a pair of hairy-but human-limbs.

"Do I look like a bear 4?"

"Now's not the time to joke around."

"I went back to my original form by chance. For some reason, I changed back again after a while."

Emi was not the sort to joke. Under her crushing stare, Maou could only answer honestly.

"There's no point lying to me."

Unfortunately, his sincerity was lost on her.

"Is this what the Hero should be saying? I don't think I'll be able to transform back for a while. Why don't you analyze this incident instead of spying on me? You might be able to learn something from it."

"...What do you have in mind?"

“I’m going to eat at another underground place and see if it collapses too.”

“Idiot.”

“Shove it. I’m tired, so I’ll be going home to sleep.”

“Wait!”

“You really are a pain in the ass, you know that? I don’t think anything else will happen today. It might have been an accident, but I did regain mana, and the enemy attack failed.”

Maou put an annoyed look on his face to chase Emi away, but Emi focused on the part of his words that most drew her attention.

“The attack failed? What do you mean?”

“Didn’t you hear what Chi-chan said?”

Maou shrugged in annoyance.

“There’s no way it was a natural occurrence. It happened when you and I were both there, so it’s sure to be the work of some third party. I don’t know if someone deployed a Sonar pulse or used demonic magic to interfere, but we can be sure that our covers are blown.”

Emi’s eyes went wide.

“That, that means the enemy is...”

“They’re nearby; we just haven’t spotted them yet. They haven’t pressed the assault yet because I turned back into the Demon King.”

“But, but who could be doing this? And using so much power in Japan, were we can’t replenish demonic magic or holy magic...”

Maou smiled, though there was a complex blend of emotions behind it.

“Well, it’s not like I don’t have a clue...”

“Wait!”

Emi was clearly shaken by this revelation, but Maou was unmoved.

“...But I’m not obliged to tell you, and it’d do you no good, anyway,” Maou replied coldly. For a moment, Emi wanted to shoot back, but after realizing that he was right, to some extent, she swallowed her words.

“Still, it would be troublesome if you ended up fumbling around during the critical period, so here’s a hint for you.”

“...A hint?”

“Yup. First, our opposition can freely use their powers despite their distance from us. Think about it– how many people from Ente Isla can do that? And then, think about how many of those people are confident in killing you and me at the same time.”

Emi tried to puzzle it out, but she ended up with nothing. As he watched Emi contemplate the matter, the edge of Maou’s mouth turned up in mockery.

“Got it? Then I’ll be heading home. I need to think of a plan, and besides, I’m tired as hell.”

“W-wait! I’m not done...”

“You’re not done yet? Well, today’s match is off on account of interference.”

With that, Maou turned his back on Emi. It was only then that Emi realized someone was leaning over the NO ENTRY tape behind the ambulance, waving and shouting in her direction.

“Rika...”

“She must be your colleague, right? She’s been shouting your name since just now.”

Still in her uniform, Suzuki Rika saw that Emi had identified her and waved her hand even more forcefully.

“So you’ve got a friend here too.”

“Shut up! Mind your own business!”

After hearing Maou’s fake-sounding lines, Emi turned back to respond to her.

“Man, I’m envious. Alright, go to her.”

“But what if the enemy attacks again after everything calms down?”

Emi’s unease was genuine, because this was different from the magic bolt incident earlier. This attack had affected a lot of innocent civilians as well. If they were attacked again, Rika might get caught up in it. However, Maou simply snorted, and smugly replied:

“Nope, not going to happen. Our enemy’s already said that the two of us are the targets. If they only attack one of us, they’ll put the other on their guard. Trust me, nobody’s better than me at villainy.”

Maou seemed quite proud of himself as he said that, though it was hardly anything to be proud of.

“Alright, don’t keep her waiting too long.”

With that, he shoved Emi forward. Surprisingly enough, Emi did not dislike it.

After taking a step forward, she jerked her head back.

“Just for today.”

“Yes, yes yes. You don’t want me to act recklessly. I know that.”

Emi did not place any stock in his casually answer, but she was still walking away from him with a frown on her face. Her colleague behind the warning line embraced Emi and cried. She was wearing sandals with the pink-collar work uniform. In all likelihood, she had come rushing out the moment she had heard of the commotion.

Maou smiled bitterly.

“After seeing this, I’ve kind of lost my motivation.”

With that, he prepared to turn back—

“Demon-King-sa-ma~”

“Uwah, Ashiya!”

Maou was not paying attention and crashed into Ashiya, who was hovering behind him like a haunting spirit.

“I’m so sorrriyyy!”

“W-what are you doing? Why’re you like this? Come to think of it, where were you, anyway?”

Ashiya shamefacedly wiped away his snot as he wept, and then pointed to a distant ambulance.

“Not only did I allow Emilia to draw near, but I didn’t sense the enemy’s presence and even needed to be saved by you, Demon King-sama! How shall I make up for this~!”

Annoyed, Maou shoved away the dust-covered Ashiya, who was weeping due to being so high-strung.

“Shut up, will you? You look like a complete mess, crying in front of so many people... We’re heading back, are you hurt?”

“Uuu, yes... yes! And I even made you worry for me! I’m so sorry!”

After that, the two of them had their particulars taken three times, received two separate lectures on claiming compensation and medical treatment, almost ended up captured by interview-seeking members of the press, broke out of the heavy media encirclement, and ended up walking back to Sasazuka from Shinjuku in order to avoid spending money on train tickets. All in all, they only reached home two hours later.

“Really, I was so worried for you. You usually take the tunnels, don’t you, Emi? I was worried you might be involved, so I couldn’t sit easy.”

After finding out that Emi was unharmed, Rika cried, as though she were the victim instead.

“I couldn’t reach you by phone and you didn’t reply to my texts, and when I rushed here because I was concerned, I found that the place was sealed off! It nearly scared me to death!”

“Sorry for making you worry.”

“Aw, it’s not your fault, Emi. Technically speaking, you were just unlucky. No, I should say that you were lucky because you were rescued. Is your wound okay?”

Rika noticed the bandage on Emi’s forehead.

“It’s just a scratch, nothing that needs stitches.”

Granted, it was little more than a flesh wound to Emi, but it was quite severe in Japan.

“Emi, can you go home?”

“I’ve given the police my contact information and I’ve listened to the disaster relief people talk about compensation and medical fees. They told me that they’d admit me to the hospital once their work here was done, but my injuries aren’t a big deal.”

“Then you can’t go back! You need to wait until they give you your diagnosis at the hospital. Emi, do you have your phone and cash?”

“My phone’s on me, but my handbag and everything else are buried in the debris.”

Overwhelmed by Rika’s forcefulness, Emi obediently answered her question.

“Ah! That means my medical insurance card, my savings book and my stamp are...”

As she recalled all the valuable things she had been carrying on her, Emi felt faint all of a sudden.

“Then you should take this. Call me after you’re done with the hospital. I’ll go fetch you.

Rika swiftly withdrew three 10’000 yen bills from her wallet and

stuffed them into Emi's hands.

“Ri-Rika?”

“Sometimes, things just happen to work out for the better. Also, be careful that you don't get hemmed in by the media. Hey, you *have* to contact me, okay?”

With that, Rika pushed Emi back past the caution tape. She gestured for Emi to leave, and after taking a few steps, Emi looked back and saw a reporter-like man pointing a mike at her colleague—the one who had just talked to one of the survivors.

Although she did not know what they were talking about, Rika shooed the man away and then vanished into the crowd.

Emi returned to the ambulance where she had been treated earlier. Then she and several other survivors were taken to the nearest hospital.

After a detailed examination, her injuries were once again deemed light. Still, the doctor wrote up a somewhat exaggerated medical certificate for her and smiled:

“After all, when a nice young girl like you gets a cut to their forehead, of course they'll have to pay for it.”

All Emi could do was smile bitterly.

By the time her checkup was complete and she had left the clinic, it was around 9:30 at night.

“Hey, Rika?”

Since she was in a hospital, Emi used a green-colored public phone— a rarity on the streets— to call Rika. It rang once before the other side picked it up.

『Hey, Emi? How was it?』

“Mm, they did a lot of tests on me, but nothing turned up, as expected. The wound was thoroughly disinfected again. They also prescribed a lot of medicine for me, but the doctor said I didn't need

to take it if it didn't hurt too much.”

『I see, fortunately it wasn't so bad! Which hospital are you at?』

“I'm in Shinjuku, at the Tokyo Medical University Hospital...”

『Okay! Got it. Hang on, I'm coming to get you now.』

“Eh? No, there's no need for you to bother...”

『Hm? Is your family coming to pick you up?』

This was a common question when one encountered emergencies like these, but Emi could not answer it without lying.

“No, ah, it's just that my parents aren't in Japan...”

『Eh? They're overseas, then?』

Rika sounded quite surprised, and there was the sound of something being prepared in the background.

“Some... something like that... mm...”

『All the more reason for me not to leave you alone! In any case, I'll take a cab over. I should be there in 10 minutes. Wait for me there, okay? Bai bai~』

“Ah, Rika, wait...”

But Rika had already hung up. Emi could only stare blankly at the green handset.

Out of options, all Emi could do was sit in the waiting area outside the hospital clinics until the person at the counter called her name.

The counter receptionist explained to Emi that she would be paying for the consultation, treatment, and administrative fees in her own name, but she could submit the necessary documents and claims forms afterwards to receive compensation.

As she thought about how she would pay for the relevant charges, she remembered that her new wallet and handbag were stuck under the debris, and the money shoved into her hand—

“Sometimes, things just happen to work out for the better.”

She repeated Rika’s words to herself.

She did not have her medical card, but the receptionist seemed to understand and said that it would be fine as long as she brought it over before the month was over. Even so, the fees for her consultation and the paperwork were by no means a small sum.

After getting her receipt and her prescription, a taxi stopped outside the main hallways. She noticed Rika seated in the back, while Rika noticed Emi and ran out.

“Emi, are you alright?”

“Ah, yes. Thank you for all your help.”

With that, Emi presented the receipt and the prescription to Rika.

“What did I tell you?” Rika smiled.

“In any case, it’s good that nothing serious happened to you. Come stay at my place tonight. I’ve told the cab to wait outside.

“Ah, but... is that really alright?”

“It’ll be fine. Don’t worry so much, come on!”

“Mm, yes!”

Urged on by Rika’s irresistible force of personality, Emi could only follow her into the cab. By the time she realized it, they were already in front of Rika’s apartment in the Takadanobaba district.

“Sorry for the intrusion...”

Rika’s apartment was about the same size as Emi’s place, but a scent hung in the air, that of construction materials, wallpaper, and paint that was unique to a newly-built home.

“In any case, if it’s just your forehead that’s hurt, then take a bath and change! You can wear my sports clothes tonight. Just relax.”

Rika handed Emi a neatly folded set of sweatshirt and sweatpants, and then took out a suit cover.

“Take off your clothes and put them in here. You can’t throw them away even if they have holes or tears in them.”

“Eh? Why’s that?” Emi asked, unable to understand. Meanwhile, she changed as Rika told her. Her grey working clothes did not seem too badly damaged, but the blood from the cut on her forehead had stained her dress shirt.

“It’s so you can claim compensation from the tunnel management company, of course. It’s better to store the evidence before everything blows over.”

“I see...”

There were no government or corporate policies which paid out compensation to the average civilian on Ente Isla, so the concept was alien to Emi.

The feudal system of Ente Isla taxed the serfs for public works projects, but when the people met with accidents or disasters, it typically washed its hands of the matter after paying out a pittance.

“Still, you seem really knowledgeable about all this, Rika. You’ve been a great help.”

“Hey, don’t knock me. I’ve been through a lot myself. Ah, the bathroom’s over there. You can wear my new underwear. I figure your bust size should be about the same as mine.”

“Probably smaller than Chiho’s.”

“Ah?”

“...Nothing, sorry, it’s nothing.”

Emi sighed at the words which had slipped out of her mouth, and then she checked to see if the measurements of the undergarments she had received were the same as her own.

“There’s so many things I need to thank you for. I’ll go bathe now.”

Once in the shower, the warm water splashed off her skin, and with it went the fatigue and stress that had accumulated on her all day. It filled her soul with unparalleled comfort.

“I’ll leave the towel on the washing machine in the changing room. Also, here’s a face towel for you, and the shower foam is in the leftmost bottle.”

Rika slipped a face towel into the bathroom through the gap in the door, and pointed to a row of bottles.

“Speaking of which, have you eaten yet?”

“Nope, frankly speaking I’m starving.”

Rika laughed at that honest answer.

“I’ll make something simple for you, then. Take your time and bathe. You’re not picky about your food, I trust?”

After Rika left the changing room, Emi bathed silently for a while.

“...Why?”

Her heart was unfocused and unable to calm down, but at the same time it felt very comfortable.

On her journey to defeat the Demon King, she had received help from many people whenever she had been wounded and fallen. Many others had shared their food and lodgings with her.

However, she had not felt then what she was feeling now.

It was like hot water flowing over her skin, a simple, comfortable emotion that made her wish it would go on forever.

It felt like there was a faint glow within her body, and her heart felt like it was enfolded in the feathery wings of an angel.

“In any case, a toast to your safe return!”

Emi and Rika clinked their glasses of cool mineral water.

Rika had simply reheated leftover meat and potatoes from yesterday, but it was delicious cuisine for the famished Emi. She began wolfing it down with her usual expression on her face.

“Well, given your appetite, I guess I don’t have to worry.”

Rika laughed, completely relieved.

“But you’ve got to be careful, you know? Some injuries only show symptoms after a while.”

“I’ll remember that. Thank you very much, Rika. I’ll pay you back the money.”

“Well, you’re pretty unlucky to have lost your wallet and savings book in such a short period of time, Emi.”

The two of them chatted on and off, and eventually Rika switched on the TV without thinking.

Every channel was reporting on the tunnel collapse Emi had encountered. Rika skipped past all of them and ended up on a music channel.

She was probably thinking of Emi’s feelings. Thanks to Rika, Emi suddenly took notice of the pictures on top of the television shelf. Rika saw where Emi was looking, and said:

“Oh, that’s my family.”

The background was a building which looked like a factory. Apart from Rika and a couple who looked like Rika’s parents, there was a girl who looked like a younger version of Rika.

“Is that your sister, Rika? You two look really alike.”

“I get that a lot. I have no idea how we look alike, though,” Rika smiled.

“Ah, sorry, but could I take a call?”

Rika’s phone rang in her bag, and she answered it after gaining Emi’s approval.

“Hm? Yes, it’s me. You called my cell phone, who else were you expecting to pick up?”

Emi watched Rika with surprise, because she was speaking in a completely different way from how she did normally.

“Ah, you got it? Well, it’s nothing too rare. I felt bad about drinking it all by myself. Grampa’s okay with anything that’s shochu, right?”

Emi had heard that Rika was born in Kansai, but the accent she had now was different from what Emi knew of the Kansai accent.

“I’ll come back for Bon. Today’s accident? Don’t worry, it was closer to my workplace. My house is fine. Remember to let everyone know, alright? Good, good~”

After that brief conversation, Rika planned to put the phone aside. Instead, she changed her mind halfway and pulled the charger cable over to plug it in.

“My mom called. She seemed worried about today’s incident, but there’d be no point telling mom about you.”

“This is the first time I’ve heard you speaking in a dialect, Rika.”

“Ah? Really? I talk like this to my family and old friends. I was born in Kobe.”

That being the case, everything Rika had said since she had met her at the accident site now took on a different meaning. Had she let her voice slip?

Emi smiled.

“Oh– it feels new. I’ve pretty much never left Tokyo. I’d like to see the west.”

Emi was very well-paid, but that did not mean she was in a good financial position. Naturally, she had not gone on a vacation before. She had considered exploring Japan if the Demon King was not around or if she had defeated him, but that was probably in the

future.

Emi focused on eating for a while, and after the singing program was over, she had finished everything on her plate.

“You ate it all up; looks like I really didn’t need to worry.”

“That’s all thanks to you. Should I put the cutlery in the sink to soak?”

Emi neatly stacked the plates and took out the oily dishes to soak in the water.”

“Thanks. Just leave it there, I’ll wash it later.”

“Alright. Sorry, but could I look at the news?”

“Hm? Sure, but will it be alright?”

The news was probably all about that incident. Rika’s expression turned dull for a moment, but Emi shook her head to indicate that she was fine.

“I’d like to see the weather forecasts, and I’m sure they’ll broadcast some other news.”

“Mm, I see. Yeah, they ought to be done with all that by now.”

Rika picked up the remote and changed the channel. Emi sat back in her original place and watched the news. The headline was the Shinjuku tunnel collapse, but they spent less time on it than expected, instead switching to the armed robberies that had taken place in Tokyo.

“What a pain~ it feels like my luck was no good the way I got pulled into this matter.”

Rika studied the side of Emi’s face as she shared her thoughts, and then—

“Ah~ really! I love you so much, Emi!”

“Eh? What? Wait, Rika?”

Rika suddenly hugged Emi from behind.

“What’s wrong? Hey, why are you doing this?”

“Mm~ Emi, you’re the best! My heart feels calm now.”

“Eh?”

Rika rocked Emi like a cradle for a while. Emi had no idea what this was about, but she allowed Rika to do as she pleased. Finally, still in that position, Rika told Emi:

“The truth is, I used a normal accent after moving to Tokyo because it was troublesome otherwise.”

“Troublesome?”

Emi was confused. There were many foreigners in Tokyo. There were quite a few dialect speakers in Emi’s company, for instance.

“Well, if I use a normal accent, people won’t pay attention to your birthplace, right?”

Come to think of it, all Emi knew about Rika was that she was born in Kansai, but she did not recall Rika ever speaking about her hometown. Granted, Emi had no intention of asking about it, so she had not brought the topic up.

“The people in Tokyo were really forward when it came to asking the Hyogo people about earthquakes |5|.”

“Ah...”

Enlightenment suddenly dawned on Emi, and she turned in Rika’s embrace to look at her.

“It’s like there’s nothing else they can ask about besides the earthquake. Everyone only talks about the earthquake. I found it annoying, so I didn’t bring up my family.”

Rika looked at the pictures of her family.

“I was young during the Great Hanshin Earthquake, but I still can’t forget what happened then. It was really scary. My family lived in a district with a lot of SME factories, and the damage there was pretty

severe.”

Emi knew that about ten years ago, there had been a historic earthquake in Japan.

“It was a miracle that my family all survived, but quite a few of my friends’ family members were affected. I was a grade schooler, but there were two less classmates when school opened again. I hope they just moved away.”

“...I see.”

“So those people who just flat out ask ‘How was the earthquake’ really piss me off. Grampa’s factory was destroyed, and there were aftershocks while we were evacuated. We lived every day in anxiety and fear.”

The way Rika was narrating this so calmly sounded like someone who had made peace with themselves.

“But once I left my hometown, I realized that others thought of it as a distant thing. No matter where I went, no matter how long it was after the earthquake, once I mentioned I came from Kobe, everyone would ask me about earthquakes. They were all so unoriginal. I didn’t want to be friends with them.”

However, without knowing when it had started, she had abandoned that stance of hers.

“I guess it was because everyone I met was like that, so if I decided to cut them all out of my life, I wouldn’t have any friends left. So I changed my accent and hid my place of birth. I’m sorry I lied to you—”

“As if, this hardly qualifies as...”

“Emi, you’re the first person who didn’t ask me about the earthquake even after I mentioned I came from Kobe.”

Rika finally untangled herself from Emi. She picked up the glasses and went to the kitchen, refilling them with more mineral water

from a fresh bottle in the fridge.

“I wonder what would happen to me if I suddenly gave up the principles I was holding onto for so long.”

That sentence struck a chord with Emi.

“There were people who took advantage of the chaos. But in contrast, there were also those people who didn’t know how their own futures would turn out, but still did their best to help others anyway. Now that I think about it, don’t they usually show it that way? You know, when you’re hesitating, an angel and a demon who look exactly like you debate the topic on your shoulders.”

Rika smiled as she used her hands to mime a pair of people talking.

“I feel that if they want it hard enough, anyone can become an angel or a demon.”

“Angel... or demon?”

Emi took Rika’s thoughtlessly-uttered comments to heart, and began thinking.

“And the factory in the background of that picture was the fruit of 10 years of my grandpa and my dad’s labor. Even in these tough times, they’re getting by with the connections they made with others.”

Rika placed a cup before Emi and continued:

“It was really scary– I didn’t expect something like that to happen even in Japan, and to my friend, to boot. I didn’t even want to think about it.”

Friend. The word surprised Emi. Were the classmates whose families affected were good friends of Rika’s?

Under those circumstances, Rika could have easily been one of the victims. It was because she had experienced such horror in the past that the adult Rika now devoted herself to helping Emi and

encouraged her in every way.

“Emi?”

“...Hm?”

“Are you alright? I’m sorry, I made you think about useless things.”

With that, Rika smiled bitterly and down the entire glass of mineral water, as though to swallow the dark feelings of her memories.

“However, in the end I made it out okay. And you helped me a lot, Rika. Thank you.”

“Don’t be like that. It’s only common sense to help friends, right? It’s kind of weird that you’re so serious.”

Just then, that feeling returned. The faint glow in her heart, that comfort which felt as though her entire body was protected by someone.

“That’s why I don’t want to ask about you.”

“Hm?”

“Where you stay, where you came from, all of these aren’t important. To me, you’re a friend I can joke with, eat with, and occasionally play with. That’s enough for me.”

“Rika...”

“That said—”

Rika suddenly grinned before leaning close to Emi’s face.

“Who *was* that man?”

“Eh?”

“The one talking to you at the site of the incident.”

“Eh? Ehhhhh? H-him?”

Naturally, Rika was talking about Maou.

“So you’re close enough that you can address him like that? He seems like a good guy. Kind of interesting—”

“Wait, Rika, didn’t you say you wouldn’t ask anything? Besides, that fellow and I aren’t like that at—”

“Love is a different matter! Any man who comes near my angel is a wolf!”

“Rika, your personality’s become really weird all of a sudden! Besides, I just know him. Or maybe it’s not even that. In any case, he’s not just a wolf, he’s a full-on demon!”

That was not a lie, of course. It was true that she knew him, and it was true that he was a demon.

“Demon...”

“Emi?”

“Angel and... demon.”

Maou had regained his demon form back then— at the scene of that tragedy.

“What’s wrong?”

Emi looked at Rika’s face as she leaned forward in inquiry. It was the face of Rika, who called her friend.

When she was bathing, and when she had been embraced by her friend at the dinner table, her heart felt as warm as though it had been wrapped with an angel’s feathers.

And the reason for that was because of—

“The human... heart?”

CHAPTER 3

THE DEMON KING AND THE HERO STAND TALL IN SASAZUKA

魔王と勇者、笹塚にふり



“What are you doing so early in the morning? I’m working today, so could you let me sleep in a little?”

Emi would be going to work with Rika, so technically it was not that early.

Rika had tried to keep Emi at home because she was worried and wanted her to rest, but Emi did not want to burden her friend any further. More importantly, her hypothesis from last night drove her steps towards Villarosa Sasazuka Room 201.

Emi’s blouse was stained by blood, so she borrowed one from Rika. However, there was nothing to be done about her work clothes and shoes, so she had to make do with what she had. She climbed the stairs of Villarosa Sasazuka and loudly rang the doorbell.

She thought that Maou might not open the door if this was just a simple visit, so she had a brown envelope on hand which she had bought from a convenience store along the way. However, Maou was wary of Emi, and refused to undo the door chain, though he still opened the door for her. Thus, Emi slipped the envelope to him through the gap in the doorway.

“Relax, there’s no poison or razor blades inside.”

“From what I recall, there’s nothing I’ve received from you that wasn’t dangerous.”

“Ara, so the 1000 yen from the day before is a gift, then?”

Maou immediately snatched at the envelope.

“Now we’re even.”

“Oi! Didn’t you promise that you wouldn’t harass me for the time being...”

“I also served as your guarantor, so that cancels it out.”

“You...”

Maou looked like he was about to start complaining, but Emi interrupted him through the gap in the door.

“Yesterday!”

“Ah?”

“Is Ashiya... is Alciel alright?”

Maou had a clearly suspicious look on his face as he heard Emi’s question.

“You... did you get hit on the head or something?”

“Shut up! How’s he now? Er, is he hurt?”

Emi knew that this was a very clumsy way of inquiring about him, but she was at her wits’ end.

“His physical injuries were light, but the mental injury was heavy.”

Maou was still suspicious of her, but he answered anyway.

“By the way, you *do* know he didn’t turn back into a demon, right?”

“Ngk...!”

“Wasn’t that what you wanted to know?” Maou snorted.

Apparently it had gotten to Emi, because she did not retort with her usual forcefulness.

“What proof do you have of that?”

“And what are you going to do if I say he turned back to his original form? Barge in and kill us all?”

“Ah...”

Maou did not seem to expect a reply, and he flatly continued:

“When he learned that I returned to my original form, he wailed about ‘Ahhhh I didn’t do anything for my Lord when he was in danger!’ In the end he overslept this morning. Seriously, what about

my breakfast...”

Emi was curious about why Ashiya had remained in human form.

From what Rika had said, Emi hypothesized that Maou had briefly resumed his Demon King form because he had absorbed the fear, despair, and other negative emotions from the people on the scene and converted it to mana.

If Emi’s guess was right, then Maou should have been able to use his remaining demonic magic to trigger a disaster on par with the earthquake which caused that tunnel collapse. From there, he would be able to absorb the negative emotions of the innocents involved caught within it, and eventually regain his original strength, becoming the Demon King Satan once more. As the Demon King, he should not have had the slightest hesitation in doing so.

The Demon King Satan who had once planned to conquer Ente Isla was a cruel and merciless being who treated humanity as lifeforms which were less than ants. It would not have been a surprise if he had gone ahead and done so right away.

However, after nervously eying him, Emi discovered that Maou had answered the door with his usual slack attitude, and he had even said that he had a shift today.

What on earth was the Demon King thinking? Emi could not figure him out.

And then, what he said after that departed further from the realm of Emi’s understanding.

“Speaking of which, are you alright? You got hurt, and then you ended up using some power when you put Chi-chan to sleep, right?”

“...Eh?”

Emi froze.

“What... what are you talking about?”

“What else could I be talking about? You haven’t recovered your

strength yet, right? Was it really okay for you to do that?”

It could not be that she had suddenly stopped being able to understand Japanese.

“Are... are you serious?”

“What, I can’t be concerned for others?”

Maou looked unhappy and surprised at the same time.

Emi felt herself going weak and a little nauseous. What on earth was he saying?

Hatred welled up in her heart, totally unlike how she had felt when she had first discovered Maou and Ashiya in Japan. It felt just like that day when she had received news of her father’s death.

“I... I’m not weak enough that I’d need my enemy to worry about me.”

But in the end, that was all she could say.

“Really? I guess,” came Maou’s simple reply.

“Well, if there’s nothing else, please go back.”

“I don’t need you to tell me that.”

Emi pivoted on her heel and turned away. While she wanted to learn more about Maou returning to his original form, she had no idea what the hatred brewing in her heart would make her do if she stayed here.

Maou might or might not have guessed what Emi was feeling. All he did was watch her leave, a baffled look in his eyes. However, he appeared to have thought of something all of a sudden, and called out to her.

“Ah! Oi, Emi!”

However, Emi did not intend to stay here for even a single moment longer, so she did not stop.

“If you go down the stairs in those shoes...”

But Maou could not finish his sentence.

The staircase was made of galvanized iron; in other words, it made a terrific racket.

“Ah!”

All Maou heard was Emi’s exclamation.

The paint and rust-streaked metal stairs, subjected to long years of weathering and tilted by time, was something which barely managed to stay on the side of legality.

A wordless cry came from the distance. Said cry seemed to be descending.

“...You’d better be careful in case you slip and fall.”

Maou only managed to finish his sentence after the commotion in the distance had died down.

Ashiya had just woken up. Still in his sports wear and with a distinctly unhappy look on his face, he opened the cabinet which contained their first aid box..

Emi sat quietly in the corner of the room, upon a stack of job-hunting magazines tied up with raffia string. She looked like she had no idea where to express her feelings.

It was a miracle that she had only been so lightly injured after slipping on the topmost step of the stairs. However, her blazer and skirt—which had survived the tunnel collapse largely unscathed—was now covered in a thick layer of dust and looked very worn-out. One of her shoes was covered in scuff marks after it had been dragged against a concrete block.

Emi herself had bruised fingertips because she had unconsciously reached out for the railing. Her butt was bruised from where she had fallen on it, and her nose was scraped from landing face-first.

Going down the apartment steps had actually been worse than

having a tunnel collapse on top of her.

“Honestly... Even in your present state, I cannot believe Emilia the Hero who cornered the Demon King would actually be covered in injuries from falling down an apartment staircase... This will only make the Demon King look bad.”

Worse, the old wound on her forehead had split open, and the blood had soaked through the gauze and bandages. Said bandages were also browned from dust, so it looked like a new dressing would have to be applied. However, Ashiya had a worried expression on his face as he showed the contents of the first aid box to the Demon King.

“We’ve only got plasters left... didn’t you buy any gauze or something?”

“I didn’t expect any of us to be hurt this badly. Looks like we’ll have to buy some gauze and bandages. Ashiya, sorry to bother you, but could you go to the pharmacy in front of the train station and get some? They should be open now. I don’t want this fellow to give me a hard time.”

“Understood. May I request the loan of Dullahan-go? I need to buy some other things as well.”

“Granted, However, if you’re so loaded, make sure you cook something which tastes better.”

“My Lord, you are too wasteful in your expenditures. Thus I must rely on my own savings. I’ll be heading out, then.”

Still wearing the sports attire he had on while sleeping, Ashiya set out. After hearing the sound of the bicycle leaving, Maou snorted.

“Then, let’s clean your wound before he gets back. We’ll wash it with water and then use antiseptic...”

Maou squeezed the towel dry and sat in front of Emi. Only then did Emi come to her senses and snatch the towel from his hands.

“Don’t, don’t touch me! I’m not a kid, I can do this myself!”

“Fine, fine, fine, sorry about that. Knock yourself out, then. Tissues are over there.”

The box of tissues in question was the same one Emi had used to hit Maou. She wiped the dust off her forehead and nose, but when she applied the antiseptic to it, she winced for some reason.

“Does it hurt?”

“Of course not!”

Maou’s offhand remark resulted in the opened bottle of antiseptic being thrown his way.

“That’s dangerous! What the hell are you doing?!”

“Shut up! What the hell are *you* doing? You’re the Demon King, aren’t you? Since you’re the Demon King, you should be acting like one and wreaking havoc in this world, shouldn’t you?!”

“Huh? What are you going on about?”

Maou had no idea what Emi was trying to say and he was genuinely surprised. In contrast, Emi could not help but continue shouting: “What the hell is this?! I’ve never heard of a Demon King who’s poor as a church mouse, cooks his own food, is a model employee, and even has high school girls admiring him!”

“Erk!”

Maou cowered briefly as Emi attacked his weak spots, but he promptly pulled himself together and counterattacked.

“And I’ve never seen a Hero who slipped on a staircase and then cried to the Demon King to fix her up!”

“How about a Demon King who orders his minion to go to the pharmacy for the Hero? Since when do Archdemons follow such orders so obediently?!”

“Urgh...”

Emi had no idea how to deal with the frenzied emotions running wild within her heart. All she could do was scream like a child.

“Why are you being so nice to me?!” she shouted at Maou. “Why are you being so nice to me and to the people of this world? How can you even be this nice at all?!”

Maou had no idea how to answer her. Emi’s unexpectedly pointed question had struck a chord within his heart.

“How can I be this nice... how, how...”

Emi continued shouting, paying no heed to the tears which streaked her face.

“Why did you kill my Papa?!!”

That last was so loud that it even rocked the wooden frame of the apartment. The brief silence which followed made the ears ache.

Emi panted deeply and began to cry in earnest. Maou could only watch her dumbly.

“The Demon King I was hunting... was a cruel being who thought nothing of human life, someone who wanted to fill the world with bloodshed and suffering!”

“I...”

“I will never forgive you, Demon King Satan! You set fire to our fields, crushed our castles with lightning, drowned our cities with floods, and let monsters loose to ravage us! I will *never* forgive you! You took *everything* from me! You took my Papa’s house, my Papa’s field, my Papa’s life, and our peaceful days together! I will never, *ever* forgive you for that!”

“Emi, I...”

“It should have been that way... but why... why is the Demon King... so nice to the Hero...?”

Maou’s mindset in this world was clearly different from that of the Demon King of Ente Isla.

He remembered everything. He remembered his cruelty from back then, his determination to crush humanity underfoot, and that will still remained within his heart. Why was it that now, he was not repulsed in the slightest by living as a human, among the masses of mankind?

“...I haven’t thought about that myself.”

Maou could not find a definite answer within himself. All he could do was squeeze out those words.

“In any case, er, sorry.”

“...”

Emi did not answer. Still, she fixed her tear-streaked eyes on the face of the man before her.

The words were simple, but Maou’s apology was sincere.

“Er, at that time, I didn’t think that there would be a Hero or anything, and I was trying to conquer the central continent and take charge of the demons. I was running around everyday, and I couldn’t think of everything... ah, I’m not trying to push all the blame to Lucifer, but it was unavoidable. Fundamentally, humanity and demonkind go together like oil and water.”

In addition, his distress seemed genuine. His eyes roved around and his hands fidgeted as he tried to think of an excuse which would pass muster.

“And back then, I didn’t understand mankind...”

Emi had not expected to get anything conclusive for this, and neither had she expected that response from him. Once she realized that Maou was panicking in front of her, she flushed red and looked away shyly.

“Sorry for barging in...”

A familiar voice came from the doorway as it opened.

The two of them jumped in fright, then looked to the doorway in

unison. Standing in the threshold, was Chiho, who had been brought here by Ashiya.

She froze in the doorway, looking at Emi and Maou.

Ashiya had not expected the two of them to be like that either, so he stood in place, still in his door-opening posture.

Chiho was dressed in a navy blue sailor uniform, with a paper bag in hand. Said bag had the logo of a certain Shinjuku department store's dessert counter printed on it.

“Er, ah, I happened to meet Sasaki-san, who expressed a desire to visit you, Demon King-sama...” Ashiya said with the pharmacy bag in hand.

Chiho remained still for a moment, and then the bag she was holding fell to the ground. Judging by the sounds from within, there were baked goods inside.

Maou had an idea of what was going on in Chiho's mind.

She must have been thinking about yesterday. Not only had she gotten Maou in trouble, but she had even made him get in trouble on her behalf.

She had come here to thank him and apologize to him. In addition, she had changed to her uniform because this was a formal occasion, and had even bought some desserts as a gift. That was quite a mature gesture for a high-schooler.

Then she encountered Maou's roommate Ashiya near his apartment. While Chiho and Ashiya had not spoken to each other yesterday, she could still recognize him. Ashiya knew about Chiho as well, which was why he had escorted her here in a gentlemanly fashion.

Ashiya was a very careful person, so he must have told Chiho about Emi's visit this morning. Chiho should have come with Ashiya after realizing that.

However, even if she had been prepared to see a wounded Emi, it was not hard to imagine what she would think when she saw Emi blushing, her eyes swollen from crying, and Maou frantically trying to explain something to her. More to the point, Emi's clothes were dishevelled from falling off the staircase.

Maou thought of all that in the space of a single second.

For the most part, his guesses were accurate. Chiho's nervous step back proved the truth of his predictions.

"Er, ahaha, I-I seem to be interrupting the two of you..."

"Chi-Chiho-chan..."

Emi had come to the same conclusion as Maou. After realizing that Chiho had gotten the wrong idea about them, she struggled to explain herself.

"Ah... as I thought... Maou-san, you had that kind of relationship with Yusa-san after all."

Chiho's knees trembled and her eyes were blank, even as she forced a smile to her face.

It would seem the misunderstanding was quite grave.

"Ah, it's not like that, Chiho-chan, this is..."

"Chi-chan, please calm down..."

"I-I'm sorry..."

Chiho had not heard Emi and Maou's hollow excuses at all. She turned and ran away. While she was wearing leather shoes, she did not slip on the metal staircase.

The three of them were frozen there, listening to her footsteps fade into the distance.

"This... is pretty bad," Emi muttered, sagging like her soul had left her body. Maou facepalmed.

"Should, should we go after her and try to explain...?"

Ashiya looked outside from the common corridor, but Chiho was long gone.

Maou rose from where he sat uneasily. Then he grabbed the pharmacy bag from Ashiya and tossed it to Emi.

Emi reflexively caught it.

“Get out. Nothing good ever comes of having you around.”

And Emi had nothing to say.

The unexpected element that was Chiho had cooled off the mounting tension in the room.

“Ara ara, Maou-san. How childish of you.”

Even Ashiya who was standing in the doorway—

“It’s only teenage boys who can be forgiven for being so rude to girls, hm?”

“Uwah!”

Standing behind him, unnoticed by anyone until now, was a golden “pillar”.

“Land, Landlady!”

She wore a marigold-patterned dress that shone in the morning light, matched with accessories which looked like they had come from the Middle Ages. There was a wide-brimmed hat with a golden peacock feather stuck into it, her hair was a mess of gold curls that would not have been out of place on French nobility, and it gleamed in the morning sun. She carried a gold handbag with handles made of strings of pearls. In addition, she wore a ladies’ shawl of lime green lamé on her shoulders and a pair of white-enamelled high heels. Her false eyebrows—which resembled leafy algae—were the sort that would drive even shoujo manga artists away on sight.

This unexpected guest was the landlady of this apartment, Shiba Miki.



Ashiya's shriek made Maou and Emi realize the presence of the landlady, who looked like a gigantic ear of corn.

"So this is your girlfriend, Maou-san."

The husky voice made listeners think of an older woman, but it was very difficult to judge the age of this barrel-shaped woman at a glance.

"How do you do. I am the landlady of the Villarosa Sasazuka, Shiba Miki."

Emi squinted, like the sun was shining into her eyes. She did not know how to respond beyond a nod.

"No need to be so stiff. You can call me 'Mikitty'."

"Er, um..."

That was as much of a reply as she could manage.

"Maou-san, Ashiya-san, I came to give you an advisory leaflet. I apologize if I've come at a busy time."

With that, Shiba produced a sheet of paper and handed it to Ashiya, along with a whiff of elegant perfume.

"There have been many earthquakes recently, no? Therefore, I decided to improve the earthquake resistance of these apartments. Please take a look."

Much like how he had felt at their first meeting, Maou was at a loss for how to deal with her. It was not that he disliked her gaudy sense of dress; rather, his demonic instincts told him that he must never defy this landlady.

The piece of paper they had been given listed the work schedule for the earthquake-proofing. It also indicated that the tenants would have to vacate their apartment when it was their turn to have work done, and that the rent would not change. It was signed with the landlady's golden lip-print in place of a signature. Maou struggled not to show what he really thought of it.

“Ah, that’s right, there have been a lot of earthquakes recently.”

The landlady ignored Maou—who was trying his hardest to bear with it—and nonchalantly replied:

“Indeed.”

“Do you think there will be one today?”

“Well... I don’t know?”

“Speaking of which, I just met a lovely young lady who ran off while crying.”

The landlady swept all three of them with her gaze, a smile on her face.

“She seemed to be heading in the direction of Sasazuka Station.”

And in that moment—

“Is that... shaking?”

Only one person did not nod in response to Emi’s voice. That was the landlady, Shiba Miki, who stood regal and dignified.

“Maou-san.”

“Um...”

“If you’ve gotten someone else involved, you need to take responsibility and see it all the way through.”

“What, what do you mean...”

Maou was briefly at a loss because he did not understand what the landlady was saying. During this time, the shaking around them grew more and more intense-

“D-Demon King-sama! This shaking is—!” Ashiya shouted.

“Chiho-chan!”

“Did you think it was pure coincidence that such a lovely young lady would end up being the target of the Sonar and the Idea Link?”

The landlady’s words froze the three of them in their tracks.

What exactly hid below the landlady's thick layer of makeup?

"Listen, you can hear it now."

The sound of distant echoes reached their ears.

"This is gross, I think I'm getting Gate-sick!"

"Please, I'm begging you, don't throw up~"

"I can't guarantee... urgh..."

"Pull yourself together~! Looks like we can't take it slow over there either~"

"Ah? Did you learn something? Urgh..."

"According to the Sonar returns, there's a demonic magic reservoir of unbelievable size in the country called Japan~ judging by the size of the demonic magic reaction~"

"Is it Emilia? Looks like it could be bad."

"It could be~ We'd best prepare ourselves for combat~"

"Alright! Let's move fast! I'll do my best to hang on!"

"Okay~! Here we go~!"

"Uuuuuuuuurrrrrrgh! Don't, don't shake so haaaaaard!"

Chiho ran with all her might as she wept. It would seem Maou and Emi were trying to tell her something, but she had not been calm enough to stay and listen.

She liked Maou, after all.

However, when one got down to it, she was merely his kouhai at their shared place of work. There was no way she could compete with the history Maou shared with Yusa Emi.

Maou was her first love. There was no doubt about that. Maou had the ambition and passion unique to those who were set on

achieving a goal. The boys of her age group—who were reliant on their parents and only knew how to fool around—could not possibly compare to him.

Maou might not have been very tall, and he was not very handsome, but she liked him anyway.

Now that those feelings had been shattered like spun glass, Chiho's heart was a whirl of countless emotions, and she had no idea what to do next. All she could do was run forward, into the crowd in front of Sasazuka Station. She did not care if she hit lamp poles or fell over a bike, and she even ran straight into someone.

“I-I’m sorry.”

Chiho apologized without even looking up.

“My, this is quite a morsel.”

The voice spoke from a place that was a head taller than Chiho, laced with an iciness she had never heard before in her life.

“When I failed the last time, I kept an eye on you because I had my suspicions. But I didn’t expect you to fall into despair over them so easily.”

The speaker was a short young man, with a head of long, messy hair. He wore a very ordinary T-shirt and jeans, and he looked to be around the same age as Chiho. But then, what was with those eyes of his?

Chiho had never seen eyes like his before, violet and full of malice.

“Sasaki Chiho, your hatred and despair for the Demon King and the Hero will serve as my sustenance. Allow me to help you bring it to life.”

Sasazuka Station was crowded in the morning. Just two people standing still would get in the way of the crowd.

“Oi, stop spacing out there!”

A pedestrian with a slacker-like air around him called out from

behind the purple-eyed man, and put a hand on his shoulder.

“!”

The part of the t-shirt where the slacker was touching suddenly split open, and the object that sprang out from within launched him into the nearby bicycle bay.

“Nooooooooo!”

Chiho wailed from the depths of her soul. The people around her looked incredulously at the young man.

They were wings. A pair of enormous black wings sprouted from the young man’s back.

“Come, the hunt begins. Today, I shall surpass the Demon King!”

In that moment, the overhead bridge at Sasazuka Station, along the Keio-Inokashira line, collapsed from a mysterious explosion.

Maou and Emi were in a sprint, while Ashiya trailed behind them.

The loud explosion which followed the earthquake was clearly the result of demonic magic.

Judging by what the landlady had said, she was not an ordinary person in any sense of the word. However, the three of them did not have the free time to probe further.

“Wait for me, Chi-chan!”

Maou ran on.

“Look, over there!”

Emi pointed ahead

“...What the hell is this?!” Ashiya groaned

The railway had fallen, and the collapsed overpass crushed the shopping center next to Sasazuka Station. There were traces of demonic magic use, but they did not belong to the emergency forcefields Maou had created to save the people in the tunnels.

In front of the jammed roads was Koshuu Boulevard. The Capital Expressway covered the sky, and Maou saw two forms there.

It would seem the enemy had no intention of hiding their traces now. Maou stared at the people floating above the wreckage, far from the throng of fleeing people.

“It’s them...!”

“They... who are they? Don’t tell me...”

“Need I say it?”

Maou climbed up a small mound of debris, avoiding the severed power lines, and jumped from pile to pile of rubble that could collapse at any moment. Emi and Ashiya were only a step behind him.

There were two forms in the air: a man with mighty wings spread who seemed to be holding on to something, and a man who wore a hood that covered even his eyes, dressed in a robe that fluttered and rippled like a wraith.

As he climbed the debris, Maou felt something slowly returning to him. But why? Under normal circumstances, he should be feeling happy, yet he was very annoyed. He had not intended to recover it like this.

He would never have felt this way when he was still a demon. However, right now—

“Yo, Lucifer. Is that your new friend?”

The winged form floating in the air merely answered Maou with a sinister smile.

“Well, isn’t this the Demon King Satan? No, I should be calling you ‘Maou Sadao’ now. It seems Alciel’s been doing quite well for himself too.”

“Lucifer...? Could it be...?”

“That, that’s impossible... Why are you here?”

Emi was speechless. Ashiya shook his head forcefully, as though he found it hard to believe what his eyes were telling him.

Only Maou maintained his stern expression, his eyes focused on the two of them.

Lucifer was the first Archdemon Emilia had defeated. He was a fallen angel who had become a demon, and the commander of the Demon Army forces responsible for attacking the Western Continent of Ente Isla.

“It’s been a while, Emilia the Hero... or should I say, Yusa Emi.”

“No... No way...”

“Indeed, your blade did pierce me. But yet I still stand before you now.”

The Archdemon laughed coldly as he spread his malevolent black wings, which came with the title of fallen angel. There was a girl tucked under his arm like a kitten– the unconscious form of Chiho.

She was no threat to him, so why had he gone after her?

“All thanks to your new friend, I take it?”

Maou jerked his chin toward the hooded man.

“At that time, when I panicked and sent people to the Western Continent to investigate, I couldn’t collect enough evidence to verify your death. Perhaps I didn’t check thoroughly enough because I could not believe that an mighty Archdemon could be slain by a

human being...”

“Thanks to that, I managed to survive.”

“Unlike Alciel, Malacoda, and Adrammelech, you were not a pure demon. I thought it would be best to send someone like you—with the blood of Heaven in your veins—to conquer the Western Continent where the Theocracy had a strong presence, but you failed in the end.”

“Indeed. At first, I too followed orders loyally and gave my all to exterminating the human forces. However—”

Lucifer glared at Emi.

“I was defeated by the Hero and her company because I was not strong enough. That much you all know.”

“Then, can we have your friend explain what happened afterwards?”

“Well?”

Lucifer looked over to his robed colleague as he asked the question. He laughed, and nodded.

“Very well. I am—”

“—One of the Six Archbishops of the Holy Church, Olba Meyer, am I correct?”

The man froze at the name which Maou had casually dropped.

“!”

Emi was thoroughly confused, because that name was...

“Olba?! Impossible! Olba is my—”

“Was your friend, who sent you to this world, and who is now planning to kill us both. Is that correct?”

“...You already knew?”

The man’s voice sounded a little disappointed when he realised

that Maou had known about this from the start. He pulled off his hood, revealing the face of a dignified man in his fifties. The symbol of the highest-ranking clerics in the Holy Church—his shaven head—sparkled in the morning sunlight.

His pure white high priest's robes were embroidered with blue and silver stitching, and they rippled in the wind that blew between the buildings.

“Villainy is a demon's stock in trade. I can see through any villainous plot. You went into the Gate after Emi, didn't you? Once I knew that, I guessed it. Nobody else but you could make a move on Emi and myself.”

“No... no way! Olba! Why are you with Lucifer... Don't tell me you plan to...”

“Let's start from what happened after Lucifer lost to you.”

Archbishop Olba smiled coldly, as though declaring that the story was about to begin. However—

“After she drove off the Demon Army, you didn't want to see the Hero swanning around and taking all the credit, so you decided to rope in Lucifer and assassinate the Hero and friends in this world while they were weakened, thereby preserving your authority and station. Right, I'm done, did I miss out anything?”

—Maou interrupted Olba again.

It would seem Maou had hit the nail on the head, because Olba's mouth was gaping like a goldfish. In a thoroughly scornful tone, Maou addressed Olba: “What kind of cliched script is that, baldy?! Do you really think you could gain glory with something like it? Even B-list films wouldn't use such a terrible plot!”

With that, he pushed down on Emi's head, who was standing nearby..

“Wai-wait, wait, what are you doing?!”

Emi could not hide the tremendous shock she had suffered at this revelation. However, what Maou did brought her back to her senses.

“...Baldy... B-list...”

Olba had also suffered a heavy blow, although in a different sense.

“Ah, my Lord, I don’t think that’s because he’s bald...”

Maou ignored Ashiya—who had suddenly begun arguing on the other side’s behalf—and looked haughtily on the two enemies before him.

“That’s why I dislike you lot from the Heavens. It’s more humane for we demons to rule than to have a two-faced bunch like you in charge. I’ve even guessed what you used to entice Lucifer— it was the chance to return to Heaven, wasn’t it?”

“How, how did you *know*?!”

“How did I know, use your brains a little! It’s always the same shitty script with you people! When I think about how someone like you did me in, I almost want to cry.”

“Damn... Damn you, Demon King!”

Olba’s voice had gone slightly off-key from anger.

“You’re trying to act tough despite being a damn baldy! Instead of crying when I scold you, why don’t you try coming up with a better scheme instead!”

In the face of Maou’s continuous stream of what could only be described as verbal castigation, even Emi was left speechless, to say nothing about Lucifer and Olba.

“And then your next words will be, ‘Don’t think you can get away like last time now that Lucifer’s gotten serious! You can go to hell with the Hero!’ or something like that, right? Ah~ how lame! Even tokusatsu villains could come up with better lines than that!”

“What the hell is tokusatsu?! What nonsense are you babbling at a

time like this, dummy?! Haven't you noticed that they're using Chiho-chan as a hostage?!"

Emi could not help but smack Maou upside the head.

"Why don't you read the mood a little! I'm declaring my villainy here! Don't interrupt me!"

"My Lord! When did you sneak out to watch movies?! To think you'd waste money like that..."

Maou's eyes gleamed with tears as Emi and Ashiya attacked him for somewhat off-topic reasons.

"Ow, that hurt, stupid! I was worried you wouldn't be able to take it if they said whatever they wanted, so I cut in and messed them up! As for you, what's wrong with watching a movie from time to time? I make the money, don't I?!"

Thus did Maou attempt resistance, but Emi and Ashiya would not back down.

"Since when did you become such a nice guy?!"

"From time to time, I've wanted to take a break from being a househusband and go out to enjoy myself, but I've been bearing with it!"

"Are you all quite done yet?!"

In the end, it was Olba's voice that shut them up.

"Do you think you can walk all over me just because I'm not saying anything? Demon King Satan, you won't get away with this!"

"Ah, you C-lister. Your lines are so old-fashioned they wouldn't even make it in a B-list movie!"

"Uuuuuu..."

Olba's face was bright red. It looked like you could scramble an egg on it.

"Oi, you. Yes, the crappy cleric over there, I've got a question."

Maou worked his finger inside his ear and blew off a blob of earwax as he asked:

“How many people did you attack to keep Lucifer’s demonic magic up?”

“!”

“What?!”

“Eh?”

“...That’s the Demon King for you, you even discovered that as well!”

Just as Olba, Ashiya, Emi, and Lucifer looked at each others’ reactions—

“Oi, Emi, where do you think the gods and demons of this nation reside?” Maou asked in a stern tone.

“Why are you asking that all of a sudden...”

“The answer is that they dwell within the hearts of mankind. You should have felt it to some extent as well, no?”

“The hearts of... mankind.”

“That’s right. The people of this country aren’t ruled by the gods, so they easily align to the sacred or the sinful. In times of great emergency, they take on a divine or demonic nature, and that’s where our power in this land comes from.”

“...But how... That means...”

Maou nodded, and then jerked his chin at Lucifer.

“When normal human beings see the true nature of a demon, they fall into a panic and can’t offer any resistance. I’m willing to bet the muggings that were happening recently were all their doing.”

Emi looked to Olba, hoping to hear a denial of some sort, but Olba said nothing. When had they come to this country? They should have had to eat and drink during this time, so how had they

obtained all the food and drink they needed every day?

“I returned to my original form for a short time because of yesterday’s incident, because the despair those people felt at their impending deaths forced its way into me.”

Somewhere in Emi’s heart, she was still hoping that Olba would deny this. However, she had no other explanation for why Olba and Lucifer would be on the same side.

“Those guys absorbed demonic magic from the negative emotions of fear and suffering. So how do you think they gained enough demonic magic to use those magic bolts on us and trigger that earthquake yesterday?”

Emi knitted her brows as she recalled the morning of the demonic magic bolt attack, and the news report she had seen last night.

“So... if they wanted to amass enough power to return to Ente Isla...”

“In that case, I guess they’d need a really big disaster. The energy one or two people could produce is nothing compared to that.”

“But how...”

“I like this world very much. Everything feels new and fresh after I became human. This world has helped me a lot and I don’t want to cause it trouble, so I didn’t want to resort to methods like that...”

Maou looked up to the two people above him, and smiled.

“How about it? Shall we settle it here?”

The very mention of it left them visibly shaken.

“B-but, Demon King! Don’t you care what happens to this girl? We know that you’re very close to her!”

There was no longer any righteousness in Olba’s words. All Maou could do was tell Emi:

“Oi, Emilia the Hero. I hate clerics. But I hate traitors even more

than that.”

Emi’s eyes flickered between Maou and Olba, and in the end they rested on Olba.

“...Yeah, I hate demons and traitors most of all.”

“Are you okay with using your carefully-rationed energy on fighting? You might not be able to go home, you know.”

“Well, if I work hard, I’m sure things will turn out alright.”

“I like that determination of yours.”

Emi smiled bitterly.

Maou smiled as well, and then pointed to the sky.

“If you want to make a fight of it, then give me your best shot. I’ll take care of the two of you and take Chi-chan back.”

His majestic poise reminded Emi of the Demon King from the past.

“But, but my Lord...”

And it was Ashiya who ruined the mood from behind him.

“Right now, we should ascertain the enemy’s situation. It will be very dangerous to act rashly before we understand why they have waited until now to make their move...”

“Good advice, Alciel. That’s it.”

With that, Lucifer’s wings glowed briefly.

There was the sound of something shooting through the air and then a brief grunt of pain. Maou and Emi hurriedly looked back.

Ashiya’s left chest had been pierced by something. He collapsed, fountaining fresh blood from the wound.

“A-Ashiya!” Maou shouted.

“Oh, it’s that effective even against Alciel? Looks like you drove this girl pretty far into despair.”

Lucifer’s voice was a mix of mockery and pity.

Ashiya's bloody collapse sparked a new wave of panic from all around them. Perhaps the Japanese were unique in that they lacked a sense of danger, but many people still gathered around to gawk despite the collapse of the railway overpass. Lucifer paid no heed to the fleeing people, but quietly said: "Youth is such a sin. Just a tiny thing could drive her into despair and fill her with so much agony."

"You... you messed with Chi-chan's heart..."

Maou's eyes went wide.

"Negative emotions directed at specific individuals are very easy to manipulate. There's no comparing the power now with how it was before. Now you'll see how effective these bolts are against you people specifically...."

Lucifer's wings glowed briefly with dark radiance, and countless bolts of light fell from the heavens.

"Dammit..."

Their number and speed were impossible for the weak legs of mankind to evade. Maou clicked his tongue and waved, and countless light bolts changed course as his hand directed and impacted on the surrounding buildings.

The sound of explosions rang forth, followed by shattering of the glass facades of the buildings that were hit. The people inside swarmed out like bees whose hives had been attacked.

"Demon King! Ashiya, he's-"

Emi cradled Ashiya, who had fallen and was not moving. The blood gushing from his chest showed no signs of stopping, and his skin was pale. She pressed her fingertips to his neck and chest and found his pulse to be weak and fast.

"...Useless!"

"Do you have the time to be worrying about others now?"

"Cheh!"

Lucifer fired off another wave. Maou waved in the air like he had last time—

“Crap, I don’t have enough power!”

“Oi!”

When Maou was climbing the wreckage of the overpass, some of the demonic magic generated from fear had seeped into his body. However, Maou had not been actively gathering it. Thus, when the magic bolts generated by Lucifer’s targeted psychology came at him like rain, just blocking them once had run him out of power.

Emi reflexively ducked, because she could not defend Ashiya and use her holy magic to throw up a barrier to repel the demonic magic bolts.

The bolts which Maou could not swipe away struck the concrete floor.

“Guwaargh!”

Maou’s cry of pain was lost in the clouds of concrete dust thrown up in the wake of the explosions. The shockwaves from the demonic magic bolts struck the nearby power lines, cable posts and buildings, turning the front of Sasazuka into what looked like a war zone.

“Hahaha! I’ve been waiting to taste this destruction again after losing to Emilia the Hero! To think it could feel so good!”

Lucifer laughed madly. Sasazuka Station had become a hell of flying dust.

The people below were too slow to flee. They panicked in the face of this string of explosions and oddities which would never occur in their daily lives, and the entire street was paralyzed.

“Don’t get carried away, Lucifer! Our objective is to kill the Demon King and Emilia!”

Lucifer glared at Olba as the latter interrupted him from the side.

“Not happy with how I do things?”

Olba shrank away from Lucifer’s oppressive presence, but his words were still cold and cut like a razor as he replied: “Don’t, don’t forget that I’m the only one who can control the Gate that will take you back to Heaven.”

“...That pisses me off.”

Lucifer clicked his tongue with exaggerated loudness, and then turned to look at Chiho, still clasped under his arm.

“Don’t worry. As long as we have this girl, the Demon King, and Emilia the Hero as they are now won’t be able to escape us.”

By the time the sky-choking dust cleared, only a puddle of Alciel’s blood remained where the three of them had been. There was no sign of Maou or Emi.

“Lucifer!”

“What are you so worried about? They can’t put up any resistance no matter how much they try to preserve their strength. After them!”

The two of them soared into the sky above Sasazuka.

“Oi! Were you just posturing back there?”

Maou and Emi had taken refuge from the two in the sky within a dark alley. However, Alciel - whom they were carrying on their shoulders - was still bleeding profusely, and it left a trail on the streets. The enemy would surely follow it to them.

“Shut up! I’m almost out of demonic magic.”

A loud bang came from a nearby flowerpot, which shattered.

“Are we under attack?”

“Isn’t that obvious?!”

Since they could not look back, Emi ducked into the shadow of a

power post and Maou hid under the awning of a nearby shop. However, Alciel was tall, and they could not hide him completely.

“Where’s your bravado from just now?!”

With that thunderous cry, a massive orb of demonic magic soared at the house where Maou was hiding.

“Uwahhh!”

The force of the explosion easily blasted Maou and Ashiya away. They did not even have time to brace themselves for a landing.

“How, how could this...”

Emi was stunned by Lucifer’s callous involvement of innocent victims. However, she could not verify that the building destroyed by the demonic magic ball was empty.

“We’re going!”

Even so, Maou had no intent of doing battle. He put Ashiya on his back and fled with all his strength.

“As if I’d let you!”

Lucifer formed his hand into a finger-gun, pointing it at Maou’s back.

“Watch out!”

Emi’s warning came too late, and Maou’s shoulder was pierced through, sending both him and Ashiya to the ground.

“That hurts—!” Maou wailed from the pain.

“Human bodies are so weak! I knew that, but I didn’t expect them to be that weak! Goddammit, I don’t want to die!”

“What are you crying about?! Are you even the Demon King Satan?”

Emi stepped out of the shadows, standing in front of Maou and Ashiya and looking at Lucifer.

“...Oh? Emilia, are you going to protect the Demon King?”

Lucifer's mocking words were meant to get a rise out of her, but Emilia did not fall for Lucifer's provocation.

“Lucifer, this isn't what you can really do, am I right?”

She had to buy time to assess the battlefield. Ashiya was dying and Maou could not fight.

More to the point, Lucifer was still holding on to Chiho, so they could not act rashly.

“...So what?”

Lucifer did not go out of his way to deny Emi's words.

“When I fought you back then, you were much stronger than this.”

“...I can take care of you with only this much strength.”

Emi did not miss the brief pause in his words.

“Villains who take it easy end up losing, you know.”

“That's right! You've already raised your own death flag... cough!”

As Maou shouted from the ground. Emi kicked behind her without looking, which drew a moan of pain from below.

“Anyway, you can't go all-out in this place. Besides—”

Olba had slowly followed behind Lucifer.

“—*You* have even more reason to not to waste your power. You're a cleric. However corrupt you've become, you're still different from Lucifer. I'll bet that if you could recover your strength with evil means, you wouldn't be having such a hard time with this.”

Olba heard her, but did not reply.

“Still, there's a limit to how much I can take. Don't look down on Emilia the Hero, I won't let you use me as a punching bag.”

“Just bear with it for now!”

Maou's words were once again interrupted by another kick.

“You touched my leg just now, you pervert!”

“I’m collapsed on the ground and covered in blood! I grabbed your leg to get your attention. Is it such a sin that I need to be kicked in the chest?!”

Maou shakily rose to his feet. His face was a ghastly sight, as though the body of Ashiya would squash him at any moment.

“...I’ll abandon you if you die, you know.”

“Don’t worry. Being killed by a subordinate is a shame that will live in infamy.”

With that, Maou grabbed Emi’s arm, turning and preparing to flee.

“Wait, hang on, what are you doing?”

The hand pulling on Emi was unexpectedly strong, but there was no way they could shake off Olba and Lucifer with those unsteady steps of his.

“What are you trying to do? Do you think I’d really let you off?”

A complacent grin bloomed on Lucifer’s face before he attacked Maou again. Maou’s leg burst open and he crumpled to the ground.

The blood-covered trio collapsed in the middle of the intersection in broad daylight. Screams rang out from all around.

“...That... hurts...”

“What are you trying to do? Do you *want* to die?”

“Hehe... do I look like... I’m about to die?”

Emi tried to help up Maou, while Lucifer and Olba loomed up from behind, as though tormenting weak prey.

“Hehe...”

“What are you laughing about? It’s disgusting! Are you kidding me? I’m the one who should be killing the Demon King! Why do I have to die with him?!”

Maou and Ashiya collapsed on the intersection, their bodies motionless.

Coincidentally, this was the same intersection where Maou and Emi had met in Japan for the first time.

Lucifer's finger-shot whipped past Emi's cheek and tore open Maou's shoulder. The two of them fell from the shock of the impact.

"So weak. Is that the Demon King who was once my superior, who planned to conquer all of Ente Isla?"

Lucifer smiled. His expression looked vaguely sympathetic.

"...Hurry up and finish them off. Kill Emilia too while you still can. We need to preserve the strength needed to operate the Gate."

With that, Olba drew a pistol from his robes. Emi's eyes went wide.

Obviously, there were no handguns on Ente Isla. That would mean Lucifer or Olba had obtained one in this world.

Olba must have been eagerly participating in the attacks on Emi and Maou, as well as the series of roadside robberies.

The image of the kindly man built up during her journey in Ente Isla, a man who healed the wounds of Emilia and company, an exemplary cleric who lived up to the name of Archbishop, who wielded the power of the Heavens and was loved by all was nothing but a lie. And behind that lie was a man who was pointing a weapon from another world at herself. Emi... Emilia grit her teeth in hurt and regret.

What had made Olba like this?

The corrupt clergyman, completely ignorant to Emi's thoughts, trained the muzzle of his gun on the fallen Maou and Emi.

Just then, Emi heard the sound of several sirens drawing close. That ought to be the police and the fire department beginning a sweep of the area. Maou and Lucifer's groups had been spotted by

many people on the way here, so obviously someone would have called the police on them. However, since they were up against Lucifer, that would only add to the casualties.

Maou—his mind dulled by fatigue and blood loss—sensed what was happening around him.

“...Great, now... if it’s them... maybe...”

He muttered inaudibly to himself.

“Emi, hold on to me.”

With that, he grabbed Emi’s hand, which was beside him.

“Eh?”

A dim white light enveloped Maou and Emi, and before Lucifer and Olba could open fire—

“...Did they have enough demonic magic to teleport?”

Only the traces of Maou and Ashiya’s blood remained. The three of them had completely vanished.

“Lucifer!”

“...If they waited this long to teleport, they couldn’t have gone far given with the amount of demonic magic they had left. We’ll be able to catch up to them soon.”

“Uwah, that was scary!”

Maou’s sudden use of teleportation magic had surprised her, but it would be better to assess the situation before blaming him for it.

They had not fled too far. In fact, they had returned to the place where they had first encountered Lucifer. Olba and Lucifer could find them in short order by following the traces of mana.

Unlike just now, there were people everywhere—those average Japanese people who lacked a sense of danger and who liked to crowd around interesting things—and the police and fire rescue

vehicles who were busy loading up the victims affected by Lucifer's attack.

"Still, what were you thinking when you decided to flee to this place?"

There would be no escape for them this time. Or rather, they did not have the strength to flee. Given Lucifer's casual destruction of civilian homes just now, he and Olba no longer cared if the people of this world got caught up in their attacks.

"Oi! Don't die on me! Are you okay?!"

"..."

Maou was still breathing, but his face was pale from blood loss, and Ashiya had begun to turn blue. It would not be strange if he died any time now.

"Don't tell me you decided to flee here because you saw the ambulances?"

"...As... if."

"But if this keeps up, you'll both die!"

"I know."

Maou pulled himself up by holding onto Emi's hand.

"I think... it should be soon."

"Now what else do you lot have up your sleeves?"

A thunderous voice carried through the air. A closer look would reveal that Lucifer and Olba were floating in the air with their backs to the Capital Expressway, like before. Teleporting this distance could not be considered an escape in any sense of the word. Right now, one could say that Maou and gang were cornered.

"Lucifer! If this keeps up there'll be more and more witnesses!"

"Grow a spine, Olba. If more appear, we'll just thin their ranks!"

Emi shivered despite the weather. Lucifer's demonic magic was

surging up as he spoke those dangerous words.

“What, what do you have in mind?”

“A mysterious explosion triggered as an act of terrorism, crashing the Capital Expressway with no survivors. That’s how they’d put it in this world, no?”

Lucifer smiled evilly.

“However, this time, the Demon King won’t return to his original state like he did in the Shinjuku underground.”

A ray of light soared past Emi.

“Gwaargh!”

A groan of pain came from Emi’s arms.

“Demon King!”

Lucifer’s bolt of light pierced Maou, opening a large black hole in his chest. The light vanished from Maou’s eyes, and the arms that were supporting Ashiya lost their strength and dropped Ashiya bodily to the ground.

“Demon King! Demon King! Pull yourself together, Demon King!”

Maou sagged limply in Emi’s arms. Emi slapped at Maou’s cheeks, but he did not move.

“No way! It can’t be! Why, Demon King!”

Emi wanted to lay him flat on the ground for CPR, but she drew in a breath and froze as she saw the hole punched through his chest. The hole occupied the place where a human’s heart should have been. There was no emergency measure she could take that would be effective.

Lucifer looked to Emi and Olba, smiling smugly.

“I’ll give this girl back to you. Besides, she’s useless now.”

He tossed Chiho away like a scrap of paper.

“Chiho-chan!”

Emi raised her tear-stained face and rushed toward the place where Chiho was falling.

“Ngk...”

Human bodies were weak, and they would be broken by the force of catching the body of a girl falling from several stories up. Emi managed to catch Chiho in time, but her legs bent at completely impossible angles.

Lucifer smiled sadistically as he watched this scene from above.

“Olba, the contract is complete. Now fulfil your part of the bargain. “

With that, he spread his arms to both sides. Between them flowed streams of demonic magic that were completely incomparable to the blast which had levelled the house earlier.

“What, what are you planning to do...?”

Emi fought against the pain to look up at Lucifer. Lucifer, on the other hand, did not spare Emi a look. His eyes were focused on the Capital Expressway.

“Lucifer! Stop it, Lucifer!”

Having seen through Lucifer’s intentions, Emi screamed at him from under Chiho, but that was not enough to stop the Archdemon.

“...What a lovely sound. Then, let the sounds of destruction and screams of despair become a beautiful chorus until the very end!”

Lucifer launched a sphere of demonic magic at the support columns of the Capital Expressway.

“Farewell, Emilia the Hero! Follow in the footsteps of the Demon King and Alciel!”

The two great explosions obliterated the Capital Expressway’s columns.

Everyone present looked to the sky. The black concrete road surface fell on top of their heads, like some colossal lifeform closing its jaws upon them, roaring with a sound that could not exist in this world.

Nobody could stop the collapse of the Capital Expressway.

As the road surface crumbled, the cars speeding along the Capital Expressway fell amidst the confusion as well.

The Capital Expressway slowly collapsed, its sound drowning out the screams of the people. All Emi could do was cradle Chiho's head.

She was face down on the spot, chained down by absolute despair and powerlessness, and even her mind and vision began to disappear into the darkness.

“That’s a B-list villain for you. Exactly like I thought.”

Nobody realised that Maou, his chest penetrated, had a smile on his blood-soaked face.

Emi's eyes opened.

She had resigned herself to death, but the fact that she was still conscious indicated that she had not yet died.

However, she should not have been able to escape unscathed from the collapse of the Capital Expressway. What on earth was going on...

“...Er.”

She worked her body. It would seem something was pressing down on her. That was Chiho, whom Lucifer had thrown down at her.

“Chiho-chan... ack!”

Emi hurried to get up, but then she noticed the injuries to her legs. Throbbing pain ran through her entire body like it had replaced the

pounding blood in her veins, making her realize even more keenly that she was alive.

“Mmm... cough.”

Chiho groaned, and Emi slowly got out from under her. She lay Chiho on the ground, careful to protect her legs.

“Chiho-chan, Chiho-chan!”

“...Ah.”

Emi lightly smacked Chiho’s face, and within moments the girl had opened her eyes. She had not fainted; it was more like Lucifer had put her to sleep with magic.

“Yusa-san... it hurts...”

Chiho could recognize Emi, but she groaned as her body ached.

“Ah... those wings... very scary...”

Emi reflexively looked up as she heard Chiho’s mumbling. Indeed, if she was fine, then she had to be wary of Lucifer. However, the sky was blotted out by something big and black. What was it?

The collapsing Capital Expressway and the crashing sound of despair hung before her. But why was she unharmed, despite being directly underneath?

The answer was before her eyes.

“Kukuku...”

That laughter seemed to crawl along the ground, and it made Emi shiver.

It was a darkness deeper than darkness, shining with obsidian radiance even amidst the shadow. The horn which Emi had once shattered had not recovered yet, but that demonic power, that oppressive presence and the terror which accompanied it could not be denied.

Those blood-red pupils, that ghastly white skin that spoke of cold-

bloodedness and cruelty, a pair of wings that emanated a sable glow, all on a man whose height exceeded two meters— Was that not Maou Sadao, the A-class crew member from the Hatagaya Station branch of MgRonald's, who should be dead on account of having his chest perforated by Lucifer?

“You have my deepest thanks, Lucifer... Thanks to you, I could return to this state.”

That fiendish figure was currently using its demonic magic to support the collapsing Capital Expressway.

“Demon King... Satan...”

Before her eyes stood the Demon King who had turned Ente Isla into a raging battlefield.

The sinister red pupils which belonged to the King of All Demons transfixed Emi— in other words, Emilia the Hero.

In that instant, Emi fell into the depths of wordless despair.

“W-why...”

Lucifer cringed. He should have hit Maou Sadao and ended his life. Even the Demon King should not be able to absorb demonic magic from despair once he was dead.

Yet, Maou Sadao stood before him, in his form as the Demon King.

He was holding up the massive weight of the Capital Expressway with one hand. It was nothing like the Shinjuku tunnel collapse, as expected of the Demon King. How much human emotion had he absorbed to obtain this much power?

On the other hand, the prime culprit for this disturbance—Lucifer himself—had hardly managed to consume any fear and despair. That was because the Demon King Satan had taken it all. They were both demons, but one was on a completely different level from the other.

There was an insurmountable wall between the power of an

Archdemon and the Demon King.

At this moment, the situation changed.

“...Emilia the Hero.”

The Demon King spoke.

Merely hearing his voice was enough to make any humans nearby who were still conscious tremble in fear.

“Ah, ah...”

Chiho’s reaction to seeing the Demon King reflected that of the other humans. His mere existence filled people with dread, and the mere sight of him was enough to plunge them into despair.

In the face of this unexpected development, Olba’s entire body managed the incredible feat of going limp in mid-air.

Such was the power, will, and infernal nature of the Demon King’s voice. The pathetic wretch that Lucifer had been tormenting was nowhere to be seen.

“...”

Emi could not respond.

Now that the Demon King had regained his original power, he was now her enemy, no matter how she thought about it. Just Lucifer and Olba alone would be hard to handle; there was no way she could handle having to face the Demon King as well.

The Demon King, possessed of the cruelty and demonic magic he had in Ente Isla, might well decide to plunge this world into utter chaos.

The possibilities flashed through her mind for a moment.

The fear of death in her mind should have turned to the despair as she imagined the world’s impending destruction.

At least, until the next moment came.

“...Oi! Emi, how dare you ignore me!”

“Eh?”

It was not just Emi, but even Lucifer had taken several seconds to realise that those words had come from the malevolent master of demonkind before them. Even Chiho—who had been trembling from fear of the unknown—froze in place.

“W-who, me?”

“Who do you think I’m talking to, myself? Of course not! What are you spacing out for? Hurry up and take care of those bastards!”

With that, the Demon King pointed at Lucifer with his empty hand.

“Eh? Er... ehhhh?”

Emi was confused. She could not make sense of what he meant by those words.

“Hurry up! This is really heavy!”

At a closer look, the Capital Expressway which the Demon King was holding up through demonic magic was slowly descending.

“My demonic magic’s... grown rusty... it’s so damn heavy... ah, what a pain.”

Lucifer, Emi, and even Olba could only stare blankly at the Demon King as he uttered those pathetic lines and began to break into a cold sweat.

Chiho was the only one who looked at the monstrous humanoid before her and asked:

“Are you... really... Maou-san?”

“Can demonic magic... really grow rusty?”

In response to Emi’s non sequitur, the Demon King plainly answered:

“It’s... just as you can see... please, hurry up...”

The one-handed stance he had been using to hold the Expressway

up was merely to look cool. The Demon King switched to using both hands, as though he were lifting some great weight overhead, and it looked like he was at the limits of his strength. It would seem he was not just supporting the surface of the Capital Expressway, but the drivers and vehicles who had also been affected. All of them froze in the air.

“Urk... alright, here we go!”

The Demon King Satan steadied his footing in mid-air, and mustered up his motivation once more. This was the first time Emi had seen someone do a sumo half-squat to boost their mystic power.

“Are you retarded?”

Emi smirked as she said this, and then winced because of the broken bones in her legs.

“I’ve never seen such an unsightly Demon King before. I thought you were dead– why are you alive again?”

Even so, there was no mercy in that tongue of hers.

“Don’t you know? They say that you’re not dead even when the heart stops beating. After all, even if the heart stops, the brain lives on for several minutes.”

The Demon King smiled evilly, leaving Emi speechless.

“In other words... it was a close call?”

“Oh yes. If Lucifer had just started fighting normally with you, I’d be dead for sure. Surprisingly enough, villains all hate troublesome things so they want to settle it all in a final showdown. I was counting on that. Ahhh~ that was close. Fortunately we were only dealing with B-list baddies!”

The Demon King’s tone sounded nonchalant, but if Lucifer had not inflicted such wide-scale devastation, Maou Sadao would have died there and then. Should there not be a limit to how far one could take the odds?

“Speaking of which, this is really heavy! Could you lend me a hand? Ah, no, help me! Please, help me!”

She had been so worried about him, but this was the attitude he was showing her. Emi’s mood had long since gone past relief and surprise, and now a tranquil fury was slowly revealing itself. She immediately denied the Demon King’s request.

“I refuse. I am the Hero. However far I’ve fallen, I will not help the Demon King.”

“Eh?”

Lucifer felt puzzled as he saw how Emi was rising to her feet, favoring one side.

He could not understand the Demon King’s words and actions. However, he understood one thing– despite returning to his original form, the Demon King still intended to work with the Hero to help the people of this world.

“Therefore, just hang in there a little longer.”

Emi raised her hand to her forehead.

“I will settle this right away.”

“Yu-Yusa-san?”

Emi smiled down to Chiho, who was still sprawled on the ground.

“It’s just for a little while, so please watch from there..”

She put her hand on Chiho’s head, and Chiho’s body was instantly enveloped in a sphere of translucent gold. This was an anti-demonic magic barrier created from holy magic.

“Yusa-san, this is...?”

Emi’s smile was exceptionally relaxed.

“For some reason, I want to let you see this, Chiho-chan.”

And then, she cut her hand down.

In that instant, she changed.

Emi's raven hair pulsed, and began to glow. A blinding light shone from the palm of her right hand.

"Come forth! This is my power, born to exterminate all demons!"

"Uuu... ohhh..."

Lucifer began to back off. A vortex formed, with Emi at its eye. Ordinary winds could not affect Lucifer, but the power gathering around Emi was— "Holy magic..."

"I am the Hero! Though this world is different, that fact will never change!"

A sun rose on the land which was darkened by clouds of debris.

Her silver hair shimmered like silk, and then her eyes opened, shining with a crimson light that could pierce all demons.

A beam of light coalesced in Emi's right hand, resolving into the shape of a sword. The Theocracy of Ente Isla had safeguarded the celestial metal "Heavenly Silver" since time immemorial; this was the sacred art which not only embedded it into the body, but used holy magic to summon it.

The sword made from the Heavenly Silver within Emilia Justina was called the Evolving Holy Sword - One Wing (Better Half). Its radiance and potency both drew on its wielder's holy magic.

The golden light that armored her was born of the wings of a seraph. Only a Hero carrying the blood of Heaven within their veins could don that exorcising raiment. Its power also depended on its wielder's holy magic.

Suffused by holy magic, the wounds on Emi's body healed rapidly. Her broken legs, the wound on her forehead, all of them vanished like they had never existed, without leaving a trace behind.

"The sword's growth... so it can't go beyond the first stage? This makes me a little uneasy," the "sun" muttered, dissatisfaction in its

voice.

The holy sword was as slender as a rapier, and the armor which surrounded her forehead, chest and legs seemed less reliable than she had expected. In addition, she wore it on top of her filthy, tatty office wear, which made it look even more off to onlookers.

“Forget it, since I can’t show my true power here, there’s no point worrying about appearances now.”

The Emi-shaped sun pointed its glowing sword at the enemy.

“Archdemon Lucifer! Traitor Olba! I shall render judgement unto you for your crimes in this world!”

This was the true form of Emilia Justina, the Hero who had cleansed Ente Isla of its monsters.

“Whoa, that’s pretty cool!” the Demon King said as he poked fun at her divine appearance.

“Shut up! You’d best prepare yourself! After I take down these two, you’re next!”

“Fine, fine, fine, just hurry it up... but first-”

The Demon King raised his right hand, as though he had suddenly thought of something. Then—

“『Everyone, take a nap!』”

He incanted a spell which did not sound like a spell, and snapped his fingers. And then, for some reason, everyone who was watching the Demon King and the others was enveloped and held motionless by a green light. Not just the humans, but the entire world went silent, as though the march of time within the surrounding area had been stopped.

“Oi! What are you doing?!”

Emilia glared at the Demon King, who lowered his right hand and shook his head.

“Ah, this is a demonic magic barrier. It’s not like this is a good show or anything, so it’s probably best that we don’t involve them in our fighting. More to the point, I don’t want the media to gather here for an interview, so I sealed this entire region off.”

The Demon King tossed that line off seemingly without a care in the world, but the amount of power needed to do all this beggared the imagination. More to the point, it was strange why the Demon King would worry about such things.

“So anyway, don’t let these two get out of this sealed space. Otherwise, things will get troublesome... there we go.”

It would seem even the supernaturally powerful Demon King found the Capital Expressway very heavy. Emilia smiled bitterly, glancing aside to the Demon King as he struggled, and then she pointed her holy sword at Lucifer.

“Looks like I’ve got to give it my all as well!”

Lucifer no longer clung to hope. While it was hard to believe, the Demon King and the Hero were working together in earnest to defeat him, even drawing fully upon the demonic magic and holy magic that were very difficult to replenish.

Had neither of them considered the possibility of going back?

“Yeeart!”

Lucifer soared up, firing countless magic bolts from his black wings. They traced a mass of glowing lines through the air, but Emilia swept away the ones near her with a single swing of her holy sword.

The demonic magic bolts deflected by the holy sword changed course to strike the Demon King in the back.

“Ow ow ow ow ow! Goddammit, what the *fuck* are you doing!”

“Sorry! It was an accident!”

Emilia casually dismissed the Demon King’s protests and glanced

down to the ground. While she did not seem to be using any force, she soared up at Lucifer like an arrow of light, as though she had grown wings of her own.

“Yeeart!”

Lucifer barely managed to avoid that divinely-swift slash.

He flapped his black wings hard, soaring into the air faster than Emilia’s horizontal stroke could strike him.

“Can you keep up?”

Lucifer took a stance with black-glowing knife hands, and countless black razor blades cut through the air towards Emilia. He used his own high speed to strike at close range, so the two attacks struck home almost simultaneously.

Emilia had no intention of retreating. She curled up in mid-air, and her exorcising raiment flared with blinding light.

The light effortlessly deflected Lucifer’s fists and the black razors.

“...How weak, you’ve got a long way to go.”

Lucifer snorted.

“Ha, don’t act tough. It’s not like your defense is invincible, and you couldn’t even dodge, could you? You won’t be able to touch me as you are now!”

As though to underscore Lucifer’s words, a thin roll of blood ran down Emilia’s forehead. Coincidentally enough, the wound had been inflicted on the same place where Emi had been injured in the tunnel incident.

“Your flight ability could never compare to mine. If this keeps up, victory will go to me, since I can recover demonic magic!”

Indeed, Emilia ran the risk of running out of power if she fought an extended battle with no way to replenish her holy magic.

“Unfortunately, I don’t think that will be the case this time round.”

Another voice came from above them.

A massive rock ripped through the air between Emilia and Lucifer.

“You bastard!”

“You’re—!”

It had a massive pale body, and a sinister-looking tail that called to mind the image of insectile limbs. The tail was tipped by a pair of hook-like spikes.

“I dislike having to work with the Hero. But I am one who has sworn loyalty to the Demon King Satan-sama.”

This was Alciel, who had once plunged the Eastern Continent of Ente Isla into the abyss of terror.

“Therefore you are now my enemy, Lucifer!”

Could this ear-piercing voice, like fingernails scratching on glass, be the origin of the humanoid Ashiya’s acid tongue?

“Come to think of it, I haven’t seen you since just now. Why did you change back this time round?”

“...”

The same thing had happened in the Shinjuku tunnel collapse. Alciel seemed to be fated to be forgotten whenever something big happened. As for whether or not he was throwing a tantrum... his facial structure was now completely different from that of a human being, so it was impossible to tell what sort of expression he was making.

“The Demon King granted me enough power to recover from my dying state. That is all.”

“I see... So since you recovered, what have you been doing all this time?”

“...My pants were torn, so I went back to the apartment to get my

Archdemon's cloak.”

As he mentioned that, they noticed that the stoic Alciel sported a gigantic cloak. It was vast, as if to declare the majesty of an Archdemon, and it was decorated with the insignia of the Demon Army. In addition, he wore the badge of the Four Generals, which was only permitted to the Archdemons.

His present appearance was one which Archdemon Alciel—the Supreme Commander of the Ente Isla Demon Army's Eastern Expeditionary Force—ought to have.

This was the first time Emilia realized that demons did not wear clothes just for appearances— although humans probably would not care if demons went nude.

“...You've gone to a lot of trouble. Still, I don't intend to get all friendly with you.”

“Likewise. We will still be enemies when this battle is over,” Alciel replied with quiet disdain.

“Good.”

With that, Emilia stared at Lucifer, and chopped her hand at the air behind him.

The beam of light from her hand instantly melted the handgun which Olba was aiming at Alciel's back.

“Aieeee!”

Alciel did not even look towards him.

“Don't expect me to thank you. Something like that cannot hurt me.”

“You're quite something, to say all that while knowing how fragile human bodies are.”

“...Useless!” Lucifer cursed as he turned to glare at Olba.

“You were one of the humans who drove the Demon King into a

corner! Fight like it!”

“But, but we won’t be able to return!”

“It’s all the same if we lose here!”

“...Dammit...”

Olba finally took a fighting stance. He was not using a weapon or anything like that, but the holy magic within him swelled up.

The curtain finally rose on the battle between good and evil, evil and good.

“That bastard Alciel, he actually ran off by himself...” the Demon King muttered to nobody in particular.

“Crap, right now I’m not looking too good, am I?”

The sweat-absorbing UNIXLO T-shirt and stretch pants were the crystallization of the company’s sewing technology. Unlike the jeans which had ripped in the Shinjuku underground, they were completely unaffected by being worn by someone who was taller than a regular human being. They did not tear, but defended the vital regions, though they did make the Demon King Satan look a little lame.

“Is this... a movie?”

Chiho was the sole conscious witness to this intense battle of good against evil. Under the protection of the anti-mana barrier of holy magic, she watched the inhuman struggle unfolding before her. Her jaw had dropped open beyond her ability to close it, and even the pain of her body was long forgotten.

Alciel levitated countless chunks of debris into the air, and then hurled them at Lucifer and Olba at breakneck speeds.

Emilia rode one of the chunks and slashed in at Lucifer. Alciel was clearly displeased as he controlled the rock upon which Emilia stood, and the spikes on his tail quivered non-stop.

“Celestial Flame Slash!”

Emilia swung her holy sword, and countless blades of flame leapt out at Lucifer, striking his wings. Lucifer spun in mid-air, but he was not severely hurt.

“Emilia, are you serious? The Holy Church would never allow you to fight shoulder to shoulder with a demon!”

Olba evaded Alciel’s thrown rocks while shouting with no self-awareness whatsoever. Emilia and even the distant Demon King laughed at him.

“You’re the last person who should be telling me that.”

“Shut up, baldy!”

“Do you really think you have a leg to stand on there?”

“...You’re one to talk.”

In the end, even Lucifer and Alciel joined in to mock him.

Olba had not expected everyone present to turn on him, and in his surprise he could not evade a rock fragment, which struck him head on. An ordinary human being would have been slain on the spot, but he was one of the highest-ranking clerics of the Holy Church. He shook his head and muttered: “...It seems I was a little careless.”

At a closer look, there were many rock fragments around Olba. It would seem he had managed to throw up a defense in an instant, but his head had not been protected, and he bled profusely from where he had been hit.

“...”

“That hardly counts as being careless,” the Demon King muttered as he watched the battle from the distance. Meanwhile, Alciel approached Olba.

“Stay away from me, filth!”

“...”

“Uwah~ Olba’s screwed. He’s just screwed himself with that mouth of his!”

Since Alciel only spoke when necessary, the Demon King had to supply the commentary.

“Still, this is one weird battle. Do they really understand who’s friend or foe?”

From the corner of his vision, he saw Chiho gawking in all directions as she was defended by Ami’s power. Every time she met the Demon King’s eyes, a complicated expression came over her face.

“Haa... I guess I can’t bluff my way through this any more...” the Demon King muttered with a bitter smile on his face.

“Celestial Ice Storm!”

Emilia’s sword clashed fiercely against Lucifer’s defensive demonic magic barrier. Both sides were equally matched, and it threw off a blizzard.

“Argh...”

Something like frost coated Lucifer’s wings, and he began descending slowly.

“This ice freezes demons and seals their power. I’ve already caught up to your speed!”

Emilia worked her sword and it ripped open Lucifer’s barrier, leaving a mark on his chest.

“Gwaargh!”

Lucifer attempted to draw away from her.

“Get back here!”

Emilia closed in on Lucifer, using the rock chunks levitated by the Demon King and Alciel, as stepping stones “Ggh!”

Lucifer tried to keep Emilia at bay with a spray of black flames,

but unexpectedly, she did not evade them, merely took them head-on. In truth, they had already shattered on her exorcising raiment.

Alciel was hot on Olba's heels as well.

Olba had always been a backline support character in Emilia's group. He would naturally be at a disadvantage when forced to face an Archdemon with his own power.

Forced on the defensive, Olba wanted to ask Lucifer for help, but Lucifer was also having a hard time fighting the Hero.

Just as Emilia and Alciel were about to corner their opponents—

“?”

“...?”

The heavens trembled and the earth shook, and everyone stopped moving. That was because a great release of demonic magic accompanied that movement.

“Demon King...”

“Demon King-sama...”

Emilia and Alciel turned to stare at the Demon King.

The Demon King had the same light-hearted expression he had in his human form, and he laughed jovially.

“Ahhhh, that was heavy. So damn heavy! But I was pretty awesome myself, putting it down gently and all. So everything's fine!”

The shaking and crash from just now was because the Demon King had slowly set the almost-collapsed Capital Expressway down with the power of demonic magic.

“Now then, I'll be joining the fight too.”

With that, the Demon King gently put down the various cars, people and bits of wreckage that were bubbled in forcefields. Such a movement was a piece of cake for him now.

“Let’s settle this quickly! After all...”

The Demon King’s power erupted from him with all the power of a volcano, like the rays of a black sun. Alciel smiled thinly, while Olba once again went limp in mid-air.

Lucifer’s expression could only be described as panicked.

Only Emilia knew what the Demon King was thinking of right now.

The sun was close to its zenith; in other words, it was almost noon.

“If this keeps up, I’ll be late for work. I promised Chi-chan I’d teach her how to care for the soft-serve machine.”

“Mm...”

A normal human being would have fainted just from having the Demon King glance at them, but Chiho—shrouded by the barrier as she was—blushed bright red instead.

Alciel looked to the sky, as though groaning, while Emilia pinched herself for finding the Demon King’s evil smile a little adorable.

“Now then... You two! How dare you relegate me, the conqueror of the world, to such menial labor!”

So *that* was why he was so angry!

Before anyone could say that to him, the Demon King transfixed the fallen Olba with a keen gaze.

“Urgh?”

The mere force of the Demon King’s glance was like being hit by a gigantic hammer, and it sent Olba flying. He hit part of the Capital Expressway and stuck in the concrete, passing out on the spot.

“So weak! You’re so weak, Olba!”

The Demon King did not even bother looking at Olba as he laughed, and in the next moment he stood in front of Lucifer.

Needless to say, not even Emi—who had been standing near

Lucifer—had seen him move, to say nothing of Lucifer himself.

“De... Demon King-sama...”

All the strength had fled Lucifer’s frightened body.

“Things being as they are, I can’t really take pleasure in you calling me King.”

The fundamental nature of demons was that they would not abide treachery to a superior. Even if he was half-angel, Lucifer had once been a being that had fallen into darkness.

“Oi, Emi, how should I deal with him?”

The Demon King, eager to toy with his foe, asked his mortal enemy for advice.

The Hero responded to her nemesis in an annoyed tone:

“True, why don’t you start by making him take responsibility for messing up this town?”

“Indeed. Also, if I’m late for work, that’s on you, Lucifer. How are you going to make it up to me if I don’t get the MVP award? Why don’t you tell me?”

“What, what does that mean?!”

As he heard Lucifer yelp, Alciel muttered inaudibly:

“He speaks of things which are forever beyond our comprehension...”

“In any case, your demonic magic is mine!”

The King of All Demons smiled evilly.

“I’ll decide your punishment later.”

The Hero’s face was blank as she rapped the blade of her holy sword.

“Aieeee...”

Stared down by the light of Heaven and the darkness of Hell, all

Lucifer could do was whimper.

“If you still consider yourself an Archdemon, you’d best prepare yourself for this!”

Accompanied by the savage roar of the Demon King, light and darkness clashed above the streets of Sasazuka.

“So, what do you intend to do about all this?”

Lucifer, who was no longer in his fallen angel form, could not respond to the Demon King, no, Maou’s question.

He sat on the ground in his human form. After that intense battle, the highway was a mess and it was strewn with wreckage from buildings and chunks of concrete.

The Archdemon who had once plunged the Western Continent of Ente Isla into the depths of Hell now sat down obediently, as the Demon King and Hero had commanded.

This was Sasazuka, in Tokyo, Japan.

“The stretch of the Capital Expressway and the Outer Ring Line from Hatsudai to Chofu is completely impassable due to unprecedented events. Koushuu Boulevard is the same way, and the Keio Line is impassable up to Shinjuku. I tried to be careful, but I can’t guarantee that nobody was killed.”

“Given the circumstances, it would be a miracle if nobody had died.”

Ashiya’s human body was unhurt after returning from his demon form, but he still insisted on wearing his Archdemon’s cloak.

“If not for my Lord’s power, the cars and passengers that fell off the Capital Expressway after it collapsed would have been beyond saving. The same goes for the cars on Koushuu Boulevard. And then, there’s the matter of the damage to the surrounding homes—or rather, the lack of it.”

“This world doesn’t normally have people like us fighting, so maybe some of them didn’t take cover. I tried my best to expand the barrier as far as I could, but I may not have been able to protect everyone.

Lucifer remained silent.

“I have a suggestion.”

Emi looked down on Lucifer as she spoke. Her clothes were ragged from falling down Maou’s apartment’s staircase and the series of intense battles.

“In any case, why don’t we hand him to the police as the mad bomber?”

“I thought of that as well, but while he did cause all of this, there’s no evidence linking him to it, and there’d be no point in doing so anyway. Granted, I’m sure people would be glad to finally catch the culprit behind the serial muggings.”

As for Maou, his giant body had stretched out the fibers of his t-shirt and shorts, so his clothes barely hung onto him.

“So what should we do now?”

“What should we do... well, an Archdemon without demonic magic is kind of useless.”

Lucifer had become so obedient because Maou had drained all his mana.

Maou and Ashiya retained a bit of their mana, while Emi had some strength left. Now that Lucifer had no mana, he had no chance against them.

“Ah, um...”

The nervous speaker was Chiho. She had no obvious injuries on her, and she seemed alright besides the negative emotion and some stamina that Lucifer had siphoned away from her. In fact, she even looked somewhat happy.

She then asked Maou:

“It seems a little strange to ask you now, but...”

“What did you want to ask, Chi-chan?”

The tone and voice of the answer belonged to the Maou that Chiho knew. However, Chiho still recalled the massive form Maou had taken just now.

“Who exactly... *are* you, everyone?”

This was a perfectly reasonable question. Maou and Ashiya looked at each other.

“Ah... well, it’s kind of embarrassing to have someone ask me that question straight up. Actually, I’m a Demon King from another world.”

Maou was scratching his head throughout all this, seemingly uncomfortable about answering. It was like publicly announcing a private interest one had held onto for a long time. Chiho smiled before she realised what he was saying.

“Ahh~ you don’t believe me!” Maou said unhappily. Chiho hurriedly wagged her hands.

“N-no, it’s not like that! I saw all the awesome things you did back there, Maou-san. And then there’s those people too...”

The three of them looked in the direction of Chiho’s finger. She was pointing to the bystanders and the fallen cars which were encased by forcefields.

“Well, yes. But that wasn’t anything much.”

“My Lord, humility is a virtue, but this is the time for you to acknowledge your greatness.”

A somewhat blank-faced Alciel had resumed his quarrelling spouse’s attitude.

“Those two are demons, but I’m human. Well, more like a half-

angel.”

Emi said so with a straight face, but Chiho smiled again.

“Chiho-chan!”

“I-I’m sorry! But, but... how should I put this... it was a little weird.”

“Oh, you’re a mixed-blooded human and angel? That’s the first time I’ve heard of that.”

“Did you only find that out just now? And you’re supposed to be the Demon King– how have you been looking at me until now?”

As Maou said stupid things and Emi savaged him for them, Chiho could not hold back her laughter any more.

“Because, angels and demons and whatnot...ahaha, I always thought they were just imaginary beings. But I didn’t know they existed, and that they were so close to me...”

Chiho forced herself to speak as she laughed, but she choked halfway and Emi had to pat her back.

“Still, I’m not too sure about your personal details. I just feel like you’re really strong humans.”

“Honestly... how could a mere human embed a a holy sword into their own body?”

“I see. All the while, I thought you were someone who transformed for no reason... so that’s why.”

“Well, your current appearance is more shocking to me... Chiho-chan, are you alright?”

“Mm... ah, sorry.”

With great effort, Chiho managed to get her laughter under control. Emi then whispered into her ear: “Hey, now you know that there’s nothing special between Maou and I. Don’t worry.”

“Yu-Yusa-san...”

Chiho frantically switched between smiling and blushing. Emi breathed a sigh of relief at clearing up the misunderstanding, while Maou and Ashiya could only smile bitterly at their antics.

“Still, you...” Maou frowned in displeasure as he spoke. “It might be weird to say this now, but why didn’t you do anything to me earlier if you had all that power left? Any way you slice it, I wouldn’t have been able to put up a fight against you until yesterday.”

“Ah, you were curious about that?”

Emi shrugged casually.

“The Demon King being as despicable as he is, he might only have been pretending to have lost his powers to hide his true strength. Besides, like I said, if I went at you with all my strength, I might not have enough power left to operate the Gate. That’s why.”

“Ah, I see.”

Maou calmly accepted those words, but then he immediately blanched as he realised the hidden meaning behind them.

From another point of view, Emi could kill him at any time if she gave up on going back. And the fact was that Emi had many chances to do just that.

Emi was amused by Maou’s expression and purposely ignored it.

“I’ll say this up front. I’m the Hero, admired by all. How could I bully a powerless weakling?”

“A weakling... that’s a bit much, don’t you think?”

“But it’s true.”

“Ah~ then what do you plan to do? I’ve recovered my strength, and now that you’ve used your power, you’re no match for me! What now?”

Maou took a stance. He seemed somewhat serious about this.

“Oh– that’s how you want to play it?”

However, Emi had a smug smile on her face. She put her arms around Chiho, and hid behind her.

“Listen, Chiho-chan, that guy wants to bully me now that he’s gotten his power back,” Emi said in a very pointed tone.

“...Is that true, Maou-san?”

Chiho looked towards Maou with a heartbroken expression on her face. Said expression was so pure and innocent that Maou shrank away from it.

“Don’t, don’t look at me like that! How, how could I do such a thing? I’m the proud and mighty Demon King, you know! If there’s a fight, it’ll be a fair one! So Chiho, don’t look so sad! Emi, you cheater!”

After hearing that heartfelt explanation from Maou, Ashiya sighed, with a look on his face that was even more hurt than Chiho’s.

Lucifer seemed completely baffled as he saw their antics, as though he had glimpsed some other dimension.

“What... What happened to you?”

His voice brought Emi and Maou back to their senses, whereupon they stepped on Lucifer’s head, given that he had spoken without being given permission.

“Uwah!”

“That’s right. The important thing now is how we should deal with this guy. Also, what about Sasazuka?”

Maou looked around, and Ashiya folded his arms in frustration.

“As I recall, they say that one should finish what one starts, and not make others clear up your mess. This world has taken care of us, and going back to Ente Isla while leaving it in a mess would leave a bad taste in my mouth.”

Ashiya's words did not sound like what a demon would say, but the look on Emi's face hardened as she heard the words "going back".

"...So you're going back, after all?"

"Of course. My Lord has regained his power, so there is no reason to stay in this world. After all, our primary objective has always been Ente Isla," Alciel said coldly.

"When you say you're going back, does that mean you're going home?"

Chiho did not quite understand Maou and the others, but her question was overlooked.

"But my schedule for this month is full up!"

"My Lord, is it more important to conquer Ente Isla or work at MgRonald's?!"

Ashiya grabbed Maou's face in both hands.

"Listen, it's true that without the Hatagaya branch and Kasaki-san, our lives in Japan could have been much worse. But how much is a bunch of mundane paper and a contract signed with mortals worth? Although I do think that missing out on 1000 yen an hour is a bit of a waste..."

"Oh? Aren't we amazing. You're actually getting a thousand an hour at MgRonald's."

"Shut up, Emilia! Anyway, while I am deeply honored to have prepared chicken, beef, pork, fish, and potatoes for your consumption, think of how sad our comrades in darkness from the past would be if they knew about this! I understand you do not wish to violate the promise you made to Sasaki-san at work, but as demons, we should gladly indulge in these violations to draw out negative emotions from such a pure and innocent girl!"

"Are the negative emotions from breaking a promise to teach

someone at work so amazing...”

“Eh Maou-san, are you going to quit?”

“Our overarching ambition has always to conquer Ente Isla with these two hands. I have reaffirmed it many times ever since we came to Japan. My Lord, please make your decision today. Please punish Lucifer, settle things with the weakened Emilia, and bid this world farewell!”

“You talk much more compared to your demon form.”

Maou was getting annoyed by Ashiya’s spiel.

“So how do you propose we deal with this mess before going back?”

“It was never our problem in the first place. In all honesty, the only thing you need to do is discuss your resignation with Kisaki-san, my Lord. You must not make them think that Maou quit because the job was too difficult.”

“Hm... but we haven’t topped our region for sales yet...”

“Please set aside Hatagaya for the time being; I pray you will pay more attention to Ente Isla.”

“Also, we’ve only just bought the fridge, washing machine and the bicycle.”

“But you already have the power to control a Gate; do you still need household appliances and a bicycle?”

“Ah... what should I do...”

Lucifer was a pathetic sight, having been ordered to sit, then trampled upon, and ignored. He mumbled something with his face in the debris, and in the end it was not the demons who answered him, but Emi.

“Ah, Lucifer! Were you the one who called my workplace?”

“Er, yes... it was me,” Lucifer promptly confessed.

“How did you find out where I worked?”

“Oh yeah, was that the incident where you were threatened at the workplace?”

Maou moved his foot, and Lucifer timidly raised his head.

“Yeah, what’s all that about?!”

“Er, that’s because... you see, the first time I attacked you... Emilia, did you drop this?”

While still being stepped on, Lucifer managed to produce a cute folding wallet printed with bears, pandas and birds.

“Ah-! My wallet!”

Emi snatched back the fancy wallet from Lucifer.

“Your work ID and other things were inside, so once I looked at it I knew where you worked...”

“Uwah, Lucifer, not only did you pick up a girl’s wallet, but you even peeked around inside?”

“Outrageous. It wouldn’t be a wonder if you were charged in court for it!”

Maou and Ashiya had looks of absolute disgust on their faces.

“You went too far with the wallet! Don’t you know you can’t look inside? It’s personal stuff.”

“I knew you were a bad person, but I didn’t know you were such a sad little man.”

The way Chiho looked at Lucifer changed from one of wariness to one of contempt.

“Oi, Ashiya, what’s that on the wallet?”

“It’s a pretty popular character, called Rilak... Rilakkuma or something...”

Maou’s face twisted in pity of Emi.

“Even Chi-chan’s using a Viddon |1| bag (though I don’t know if it’s real or fake), but you...”

“It’s real! Ah, but, but Rilakkuma is cute too!”

A worried look came over Chiho’s face, and then she blurted an answer which did not help Emi at all.

Emi blushed slightly, but after inspecting the contents of the wallet, she exclaimed as though she had found something.

“Ah!”

“W-what? I didn’t take anything inside it!”

“My Kintako |2| stamp card is gone! Dammit! I worked so hard to accumulate them!”

This time, Emi’s face was red from anger.

“That, that was because I, I’d never seen food like octopus wrapped in bread, so I was curious and...”

They had long since drifted off topic and were heading further and further out to sea by the moment, heading for a distant horizon of irrelevance, but nobody put a stop to it.

“Cough, cough... What, what’s happening? Why’s everything standing still?”

“Beats me~ Could it be a demonic magic barrier or something~?”

“Who’s that standing over there?”

“Looks like Emilia~”

“Who’s that buried over there?”

“...I think it’s Olba.”

“Then, then who’s that girl and those men?”

“Who knows~”

Once they had learned about the Theocracy's scheme, Emilia's friends, the sage Albert Ende and Emerada Etuva, Court Sorceress of the Western Continent's St. Aire Empire, had followed Lucifer and Olba's trail through the Gate, and they had just arrived in Sasazuka.

“So, you're the Demon King Satan?”

The speaker was a dark-skinned man of around 30, taller even than Alciel. His white beard and hair were neatly trimmed, contrasting his tanned skin. His most eye-catching features were his golden eyes. Alberto had his arms folded as he looked down on the Demon King. He wore a tight-fitting black leather suit which emphasised his muscles. Putting him beside Maou was like comparing a pro-wrestler to a middle-schooler.

“And you're Alciel~?”

The petite Emerada sported a head of slightly curled and fluffy green hair, and she studied Ashiya with a pair of eyes that were the same color. She wore a robe like Olba did, but unlike Olba's simple garment, hers was dyed red and covered with intricate designs, while the back was emblazoned with the emblem of the St. Aire's Empire in gold stitching.

Neither of them seem armed.

“Yup. Tremble in fear!” Maou said as he struck a stylish pose, though he knew they had no intention of fighting.

“Please don't talk nonsense~”

However, Emerada's speedy reply left him demoralized.

“Ahhh, but what should we do, Emmy? I didn't expect us to have to fight the Demon King right away, so I'm low on power...”

“I don't think we should talk about this sort of thing in front of the enemy~”

“Really? Oh yeah. Whoops, sorry.”

Alberto scratched his head, and smiled widely enough to bare his teeth.

Chiho, who had been silent ever since the two of them had showed up, suddenly pointed at Albert after hearing the gigantic man laugh.

“Ma-Maou-san! That telepathy thing I heard was this guy’s voice!”

“Oh? Little lady, could it be that you got my Idea Link?”

The already sidetracked conversation took an even more bizarre turn, so Emi hurriedly interrupted them.

“In any case, let’s calm down and have a talk to sort things out. Alciel, let’s go back to your place. We can’t keep talking about this here.”

“What?! How could I invite the Hero’s party to the Demon King’s Castle?!”

Ashiya made to rebuff Emi’s one-sided suggestion, but Maou interrupted him.

“I understand. Ashiya, this is an emergency, it can’t be helped. Maintaining the demonic magic barrier is troublesome too, and it would be a shame to waste our hard-earned power on fighting these people.”

Maou’s statement was unexpectedly sensible, and Ashiya could only nod reluctantly.

“...Then how about Olba buried over there?”

“Leave him. He was robbing people with Lucifer. The cops will get around to him sooner or later.”

Indeed, Olba and Lucifer were criminals in Japan. Emi’s group, whom Olba had betrayed, and Maou’s group, who had been Olba’s enemies from the beginning, were not obliged to worry about him.

“Emi, you know the place. Take Chi-chan and the others there.”

Maou tossed the keys to Emi.

“Eh?”

“I’ll go over after I clean this mess up.”

“...Don’t tell me you’re going to sneak back to Ente Isla.”

“As if! Besides, your friends are all here, aren’t they? If I try something like that, you’ll come after me right away, won’t you? Alright, now go!”

Emi looked at him warily, but in the end she took the keys and urged Chiho, Emerada and Alberto to go.

“The two of you seem pretty pally.”

“I’m quite surprised Emilia’s getting along with the Demon King~”

“I categorically deny all that! In any case, let’s go!”

Emi glanced back once at the Demon King, and then she and her companions vanished into the Sasazuka streets.

Ashiya watched them leave, and asked:

“What do you have in mind?”

Maou indicated the Capital Expressway.

“It’s not like we can just leave this here. Ashiya, Lucifer, give me a hand here.”

Ashiya hesitated briefly, but in the end he sighed in resignation and smiled bitterly. Upon seeing this, Lucifer could not help but ask: “Eh, don’t tell me...”

“Yup. It took a lot of doing to recover that demonic magic.”

“But if you do that...”

“There’s no way around it. This is the Demon King’s will. All I can do is obey.”

“...Why did things end up like this? What happened to you and Demon King-sama?”

“Who knows? Even I have no idea.”

“What are you lot mumbling about over there?”

“Nothing, nothing at all. Please, my Lord.”

Maou took Ashiya’s hand and forcefully said:

“A superior must take responsibility for his subordinates’ mistakes. That is an unchanging fact, be it in Ente Isla or MgRonald’s. As your ruler, I must take responsibility for the things which I rule.”

Maou looked upon the ruins of Sasazuka, and smiled.

As they took in the signboard which said “Villarosa Sasazuka”, Emerada and Alberto’s faces twitched. Though they had just reached Japan, both of them knew exactly how far removed this building was from a Demon King’s Castle.

“That one, Emilia~?”

“I know what you want to say, but yes, this is it. That second floor room is the residence of the Demon King Satan in Japan – the Demon King’s Castle.”

“That room... is that the only room?”

“Indeed. All the others are empty.”

The two of them stood in place for a while, and then Emerada clapped to raise their spirits.

“Ah, that’s it! He must have chosen a house that looked run-down and cramped because he was afraid that people would be suspicious~ but the interior is actually a pocket dimension of infinite size or something...”

“It’s a six-tatami apartment, about half the size of Alberto’s mountain cottage. And there’s no place to bathe.”

“But, but how...”

“What kind of Demon King is he...”

The two of them were too shocked for words.

“When I saw the apartment, I thought it matched Maou-san’s image pretty well...”

Chiho’s words only added to it.

“Anyway, you’ll understand once you get there. Come on in.”

Emi carefully ascended the staircase where she had slipped this morning.

Upon opening the door, the smell of life in a musty old building rolled out. Emerada and Alberto were once again speechless.

Chiho picked up the paper bag containing canned biscuits which she had dropped earlier, and then looked back to Alberto and Emerada.

“Er, in Japan, it’s the practice to take off one’s shoes before entering a house. Over here...”

With that, Chiho took off her loafers in the narrow threshold. Emi did so as well, and then Emerada and Alberto took off their boots in imitation. Those four pair of shoes alone nearly filled up the doorway.

“Hm, my cottage is much more comfortable. You can’t even set traps like this.”

“Leaving traps aside, this place doesn’t even have essential pieces of furniture. I shouldn’t be saying this, but sit down anywhere you want.”

Everyone took a seat, complex expressions on their faces.

“Ah! I, I’ll go make tea.”

Chiho headed to the kitchen as though she had suddenly thought of something, but Emi stopped her.

“Forget it, Chiho. There’s no teapot or teacups here. The fridge and kitchen cabinets are empty. I wonder what they eat to live?”

“Eh...?”

Chiho looked back to Emi from where she was standing in front of the sink. The look on her face was somewhere between surprise and suspicion.

“Yusa-san, why do you know those things?”

“Eh? That’s because earlier, I...”

Emi’s voice trailed off. There was no way Chiho was not familiar with the phrase “a woman knows her way around her man’s kitchen”. More to the point, even Emerada and the others would be suspicious about why Emi knew the interior of the Demon King’s Castle so well.

“Earlier, you... what happened, Yusa-san?”

“Er... ah, it was really for unavoidable reasons...”

Just as the Hero was about to try a very unpalatable excuse-

“Oh?”

“Huh~?”

Alberto and Emerada suddenly exclaimed. Of course, this was not to tease Emi, and she knew why they had reacted like that.

“What happened to the two of you?”

Alberto and Emerada looked at each other in response to Chiho’s question.

“What... what *was* that~?”

“I believe... it was an aftershock caused by a massive release of demonic magic. Hey, Emilia, are the Demon King and gang really alright?”

“...I-I think so.”

Emi had still tensed up reflexively, however.

The surge of demonic magic which the three of them had felt was

extraordinary. It felt like a violent gale had blown from the direction of Sasazuka Station, through the apartment, and then continued spreading out. Emi had not felt such a powerful release of demonic magic since she had come to Japan, even during the fight just now.

“It feels like we’ve been tricked...”

To Chiho, who could not sense mana, it felt more like Emi was trying to bluff her way out of the question, but that was just how powerful that demonic magic surge had been.

Maou had said before that he would not do anything, but did she really believe him? Could it be that the bizarre kindness he had shown to Japan and other humans was only a facade? Just as Emi began to feel uneasy— “Oi, open up, Emi! We’re home!”

The sound of knocking rang through the air, accompanied by shouting and kicking against the door. Emi reflexively shrank away from it. With the exception of Chiho, the three of them looked at each other, and then at the door.

“...Is it open?”

Emerada narrowed her eyes and looked at the door.

“What does he mean, ‘is it open’, isn’t this his home?”

“However, is he really the Demon King~? Besides, there was that abnormally powerful burst of demonic magic...:”

“Well, a Demon King who lives in a run-down place like this is nothing to be scared of! Besides, if what happened just now was the Demon King’s doing, then he shouldn’t have much power left. If he wants to make a fight of it, we’ll turn the tables and defeat him.”

“You talk a good game, Alberto! Once you open up I’ll show you what for!” Maou shouted from outside. Only a single door separated them, yet they could not sense his demonic magic at all.

“No way! Who do you think is going to open the door for you~”

“...”

Emerada and Alberto were causing Emi's fatigue level to increase rapidly. Clearly she had been thinking too much about this.

“Dammit, if you don't open up I'm going to get the landlady!”

“Alberto, let him in.”

After Emi said that, Alberto had no choice but reluctantly get up.

“So, is that Landlady person really that strong?” he asked as he opened the door.

Outside, Maou answered: “Oh yes, she's very powerful! If you see her once with your own eyes, even your soul will submit to her.”

Emi knew this was not a total joke. Speaking of which, where had the landlady gone after they had run outside to chase down Lucifer?

Given how she had acted back then, it was obvious that she knew their true identities.

As her mind wandered, Alberto opened up, and Maou came in with an exhausted Ashiya and Lucifer beneath his arms.

“Oi, move. These two are heavy.”

Maou dragged them onto the tatami. After seeing the unconscious Ashiya, Chiho took a breath and asked: “Er, what happened to Ashiya-san?”

“Hm, well, he got all the demonic magic squeezed out of him so he nearly died...”

Maou exhaled heavily and sat down, facing Alberto and Emerada.

“At this point, I doubt I need to introduce myself. What are you here for? I doubt you came to defeat me.”

“Mm. At first, we had no intention of meeting you. We just came to help Emi.”

Alberto shrugged.

“It’s not just Olba. The entire Church is in on it too—”

“What?!”

Emerada spoke with her fists clenched, her brow furrowed, and her spittle flying.

“That lot in the Holy Church came to threaten us too. It took a lot of effort to escape from house arrest.”

“They said something about cooperating fully with them in exchange for our lives~ I was forced to retire from the kingdom too~ Are they so unwilling to hand over authority to the heroes who saved the world~?”

Maou seemed to be taking great pleasure in listening to their tales of hardship.

“Well, it’s those do-nothing bums who would say such things. In that respect, the Demon Realm is a meritocracy. How about becoming my subjects?”

Emerada frowned and stuck her tongue out at Maou’s half-serious scouting attempt.

“No~pe. I don’t want to be a pauper’s minion~”

On his part, Alberto sized up Maou from head to toe.

“You’re not built enough. Not enough muscle. A man who stands above me should be ripped.”

He flexed his pecs as he said that, as though to prove that he really had all that muscle. Chiho was actually quite impressed by it, and it went to his head, causing him to pose even more.

“You lot... that’s not the problem, is it?” Emi countered powerlessly.

“Well, that’s enough kidding around for now. In any case, we came to tell Emilia that it was dangerous. After following the trail left by Emilia and the Demon King, we easily locked onto Japan.”

“Still~ If we know that, it implies that Olba and the Holy Church who lied to Emilia also know~ so the key to victory lies in who finds Emilia first~”

Emerada and Albert looked into the distance, as though recalling the trouble they had gone through back then.

“We and those people set off a lot of Sonar pulses, and that probably gave this world a lot of trouble. Didn’t a lot of earthquakes happen?”

Everything up to now fit Maou’s hypotheses.

“Ah, what about the telepathy I shared with Alberto-san?”

In response to Chiho’s question, Alberto casually replied:

“Oh, Idea Links work on the bonds between thoughts and intent. We locked onto several minds here. The criteria we used was ‘people who thought about the Demon King 24 hours a day’.”

It took a while before Chiho and Emi decoded the meaning behind those seemingly innocent words.

Emi thought, *I see. After all, I did come to Japan to slay the Demon King, so I’d fit that profile. It was simple chance that I didn’t receive the thought transmission when it reached Japan.*

Chiho, on the other hand-

“W-why... I... I...”

Her face grew redder and redder, and her tongue knotted up more and more. Naturally, she had been thinking about Maou all day and night.

It went without saying. The problem was that other people had actually spoken it out loud, and Maou had heard it too.

“Oh~ You can’t make light of the Demon King after all~”

And Emerada’s entirely unnecessary comment sent Chiho’s emotions surging into the red zone.

“Au...” she whimpered, and then she passed out from embarrassment, beside Ashiya and Lucifer.

“...So, what shall we do now?”

Maou had no idea what kind of face he should be making, so he asked the three of them, each bearing different expressions, for their opinions. If he messed up here because he was embarrassed, his shame would be legendary through the ages.

“I don’t know. We only came because we were worried Lucifer and Olba meant ill for Emilia. We didn’t expect you to be here as well, Demon King.”

“Basically, we wanted to bring Emilia back and tell the people who really saved Ente Isla~”

With that, Alberto and Emerada looked at each other.

“However, we’re probably wanted by the Holy Church.”

“Yup~”

“So that’s meaningless.”

“Well, that’s not meaningless. There are some people in Heaven we can count as allies.”

“We didn’t need holy magic to open the Gate here because we had this~”

Saying so, Emerada produced a huge quill pen. Maou’s eyes widened.

“That’s good stuff. The angels use those pens when drawing rainbow bridges to link the worlds.”

“Wait, hang on! How can you show that to the Demon King?!”

Emi seemed panicked, but Maou shook his head.

“Denizens of the Demon Realm can’t use those. Relax, only the angels and the people they permit can use celestial items.”

“Is, is that so... speaking of which, I can’t believe you actually

knew about that sort of thing.”

“I heard about it in the past. Then, whose wings are these made from? Forget it, you don’t have to tell me. Let me guess– Lailah.”

“Oh, you’re right.”

“No prizes for correct guesses, you know~”

Alberto and Emerada immediately confirmed it.

“So that tomboy’s off doing these things again, is it really alright?”

Maou grinned to himself. He seemed to be recalling something from the distant past.

“It’s quite a risky move from Heaven’s point of view. Although, I’m not too clear on the details.”

“Still~ Now that she knows her own daughter’s in trouble~ obviously she can’t just ignore that~”

Emi was the only one who questioned Emerada’s words.

“...Her own... daughter?”

“Ah? Huh~ Emilia, you didn’t know~?”

“She’s talking about your mother.”

Emi’s mind suddenly went blank.

“Eh... really?”

“What are you saying...”

All this felt unreal to Emi. She had a dumb look on her face.

“In any case, this is yours. You can use it as you please.”

It was a quill pen made of a huge, pure white feather. Its nib sparkled with faceted light. It felt unexpectedly warm in the hand, like how she had felt in Rika’s home.

Her father had said that one day, she would learn her mother’s true identity. While she had served with the Church Knights, she had heard several times that her mother must be an angel, because

she was a half-angel and her father was human. However, she had not expected those facts to be linked together like that.

“Oh yes, your mother has a message for you.”

“Mama’s...”

Emi’s heart pounded and her face began to burn.

“She said, ‘your father is a good man’.”

Emi and Maou both froze.

“But, but saying that now is...”

“Does, does that even count as a message for her daughter?”

“Well, I passed it down as I was bid...”

Alberto straightened himself up and asked in a serious tone:

“When are you going back?”

“...Eh?”

“I guess you have some things to take care of here, so I won’t ask you to go back today. But the more time you spend here, the more likely the Church will try something. It would be best if you came home as soon as possible.”

Emi was at a loss for words.

“I...”

“Although, I don’t think we should say that in the Demon King’s Castle~”

Emi’s mind was a whirl of confusion. Unable to calm down, she asked Maou:

“You... when are you going back?”

“Eh?”

Maou wadded up the tissue he had used to blow his nose and chucked it at the bin, but he missed.

“What are you talking about? I’m not going back.”

Three pairs of eyes went wide at those words.

“...Eh?”

“Or rather, I should say that I can’t go back even if I wanted to.”

“?”

The Demon King laughed as he saw countless question marks floating up over the heads of the Hero and company.

“How much demonic magic do you think I needed to completely restore the devastation you saw just now? For your information, I built the Demon King’s Castle on Ente Isla by myself.”

Emi, Emerada, and Alberto looked to the Capital Expressway which spanned the skyline. While no cars were moving on it, Koushuu Boulevard, Sasazuka Station and the surrounding buildings had been repaired. There was no sign that a battle had ever occurred, which left them speechless.

Many police and fire rescue vehicles were stopped nearby, but it seemed even the people inside them had no idea why they had been called out.

The surrounding area was filled with people who had been caught up in the incident, but the places which should have been affected by the collapsed overpass and the collateral battle damage were completely lacking in casualties or corpses.

In other words, everything had returned to before the battle had begun. The sole difference was that everyone seemed to have spontaneously developed a case of amnesia which had made them forget everything that had happened in the past few hours.

“Oi, Emilia, this means...”

“Probably.”

“Is he really the Demon King~?”

“I guess.”

Sasazuka Station’s shopping center had resumed its usual clamor, but the patrons were hard-pressed to explain the strange way they felt.

“Which means, if we wanted to...”

“Could you have done it?”

Alberto’s answer was silence.

“Well, once a bad guy does something good, it’ll make people think that it makes up for all the bad in the past, and take him for a good guy.”

“Ahh...”

“So that’s why I was confident that they wouldn’t attack me...”

“Ahhhh...”

“How about it? A pretty good plan, if I do say so myself.”

“Then have they gone back?”

“...Well then, I should still be able to make it in time. I’m off to work.”

“My Lord...”

“Ah, yes, tie up Lucifer, don’t let him try anything funny.”

The fallen angel had not yet woken up, but he did not seem to have much energy left. Ashiya, who had just awoken, did not have the strength to stop Maou.

“...Oi, Chi-chan, wake up~ Chi-chan, you’re also working today, aren’t you~”

Chiho, who had staunchly refused to go back with Emi’s group (or rather, with Alberto), thrashed on the tatami in defiance of Maou.

“Uuu... Alberto-san you dummy...”

Maou sighed, a look of profound distress on his face.

“Really... no good ever comes of tangling with the Hero and her people.”

That day, business at the Hatagaya Station branch of McGonald's was very bad.

However, today he was very aware that it was his fault.

While Maou had restored everything which had been destroyed and used wide-area hypnosis to make everyone think that all was well, deep down, the surrounding people knew that “something had happened”. This cast a shadow over their hearts, and they were unwilling to set foot outside.

Chiho was visibly unhappy all day long, and she was unwilling to go near Maou. Maou assumed that this was because of the battle with Lucifer and the misunderstanding with Emi, so he decided to make the first move.

“Yo, Chi-chan.”

“...What is it?”

Her voice sounded very cold. It did not seem to be because she feared him as the Demon King, but if that was the case, he could not think of why she was unhappy. Could she be angry because she had been dragged into it? This would affect their work if this kept up, so Maou decided to ask: “I could use my power to wipe away your unhappy memories... you know?”

Maou realized he had messed up before he had even finished his sentence. The instant Chiho heard Maou's words, tears had welled up in her eyes, like she was about to cry. She seemed to be trying to stare Maou's words back into his mouth as he spoke them.

“I don't want it!”

“Eh?”

“Maou-san, you idiot!”

“Ehhhhhhhh?”

He had not expected that reaction at all. After that, Chiho had completely ignored Maou, not saying a single word to him until the day’s work was over, when she had said: “Thank you. See you next shift.”

And after tossing that line down, she had promptly gone home at 10 that night.

It was quite sad, but there was no trace of the Demon King Satan’s presence in Maou Sadao’s bearing. He ended the day’s work with no idea of the inner workings of a high-schooler’s heart.

As he rode Dullahan-go home dejectedly, Maou encountered Emi at the intersection with the restaurant. It looked as though they had arranged it beforehand. After they recognized each other, they began to talk, albeit at a distance.

“...Yo.”

“You’re being awfully careless about this. We *are* two archenemies confronting each other, after all... though it seems you’re a little down, aren’t you?”

Emi was in casual clothes, and for some reason she had both her hands behind her back. She must have been carrying something.

“It’s nothing. Speaking of which, it’s pretty late– what are you doing here? I won’t let you stay at my place even if the last train has gone already.”

“If that happens, I’ll take a cab. I’ve got my wallet with me today.”

“You, you’re that rich?! Midnight fares are like, triple the usual rate, aren’t they?”

After some small talk, Maou dismounted from Dullahan-go. While he did not sense any danger or murderous intent, their

conversations typically took place with Dullahan-go between them.

“So, what’s the matter today? Got a present for me?”

He had only been kidding, but Emi’s response was quite surprising.

“You didn’t do anything weird to Chiho, did you?”

Maou looked a little deflated because Emi had hit a sore spot. He sighed, a complicated expression on his face.

“I asked her if she wanted me to erase the bad memories of yesterday and today, and she called me an idiot.”

“...Eh?”

Maou did not seem to understand the undertones in Emi’s words.

“Did I say something bad? After that, she completely refused to speak to me.”

After he finished, he hung his head dejectedly once more.

You know how Chiho felt, but then you skipped all the steps in between and said something like that? How clueless can one man get? Emi felt a little exasperated by him, but since she had no obligation to give him any advice, she decided to pay it no heed and instead began talking about what she had come for today.

“Do you plan to go back?”

“...Haven’t we had this conversation before? What of it? Of course I want to go back with all my heart.”

“Really? Besides, I can go back anytime I want.”

“Hm?”

Emi seemed to be affecting a cheerful tone as she continued:

“And I won’t have to worry about gathering holy magic to control the Gate in future.”

“Oi!”

“I can handle work any way I like too. If I wanted to go back, I could do so right now.”

However, Emi looked at Maou with a stern expression on her face.

“Still, there’s one thing that bothers me. As long as the Demon King lives, I have to continue living as the Hero. As long as you stay here, I’m obliged to keep chasing you.”

“Like I said, it’s okay to abandon that sort of obligation.”

“Who can tell if you, Lucifer and Alciel will get up to no good? Therefore, as long as you don’t give up on returning to Ente Isla, and as long as you aren’t defeated, I can’t go back.”

“...Which means you’re staying here, even if you can return?”

She had not said so explicitly, but she was essentially saying that as long as Maou stayed in Japan, she would be staying here too. Emi avoided Maou’s eyes and made an excuse for herself.

“Well, I don’t care what the bigwigs on the other side say, and it’s a bit hard to part with my friends here...”

“What did Alberto and Emerada say?”

“They understand that the Demon King can’t be left to run around unchecked over here. Both Alberto and Emerada will continue supporting me from over there, and they’ll teach me how to replenish my holy magic on this side.”

“Running around unchecked, do they take me for an animal or something?”

“You mean you aren’t a monster?”

“True, that.”

Maou had to admit that she had a point.

“So, what will you do now? I’m pretty much out of demonic magic now. Are you going to finish me off here?”

According to what Emi said, if she took down Maou right now, she

could return to Ente Isla with no regrets. Maou instantly grew tense.

However, all Emi did with this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity was laugh at it.

“How many times do I have to tell you? I’m the Hero. I will defeat you in a head-on fight when you use your full power. Now I’m just waiting for the chance to do so.”

The smile on her face was as radiant as the sun, much like when he had met her on that rainy day. Maou felt a little disappointed, and he wondered if she was faking it. He asked, somewhat roughly: “Then why are you waiting here? It does you no good to tell me these things, no?”

As he said that, Emi suddenly looked a little embarrassed, and she stammered:

“A-ah... right, I just said that because it was convenient to do so. Yes, convenient. This is a chance for you to learn about your enemy, no? What are you complaining about?”

Maou had no idea how to interpret her stuttering speech.

“Hm, that is true, but you did say that it was ‘convenient’ to do so. That being the case, what did you originally come here to do?”

“Mmm...”

Emi seemed to be waffling about whether to say it. For some reason the way she stood now reminded him of how Chiho had been in front of the Shinjuku ARITA– like the Chiho who had asked to hold his hand.

However, there was no way Emi could make such a friendly gesture to Maou. Finally, Emi extended one of the hands hidden behind her back. It was holding a slim object that looked like a baton, and then she suddenly thrust it at Maou.

Was it the holy sword? Maou backed off and took a fighting stance in case it was a weapon, but–

“...”

He was overcome with confusion as he saw what had been presented to him

It was an umbrella's handle.

Emi, her face bright red, had offered Maou a brand new men's umbrella. It was wrapped in paper which even Maou knew belonged to a high-end department store, and the hilt was branded with the logo of a famous men's wear label.

“An, an umbrella?” Huh?”

“Earlier... I... ah, I threw away the umbrella you lent me, didn't I? When I thought I about it, I felt like I'd done something bad to you...”

Come to think of it, he had lent Emi a plastic umbrella when he had not known she was the Hero, and she had thrown it away once she learned that he was the Demon King. In other words, was she paying him back for that time?

“Let me make this clear!”

Emi glared at Maou, who had no idea how to respond.

“I'm merely returning the kindness from before. While borrowing an umbrella from the Demon King is an immoral and inglorious act, paying evil unto good is even more shameful. That's all!”

She seemed to be shouting it, and then she practically shoved it into Maou's face to force him to take it.

“H-hurry up and take it! This thing's heavy!”



“Ah, yes.”

After he took hold of the umbrella, Emi let go, as though she had given Maou part of herself. The umbrella was not light. It had a weight that Maou had never experienced before. Its canopy was made of thick, lustrous material, and the spars of the umbrella were just as sturdy. It was simply colored in dark gray, and it went well with him. It seemed big enough to shelter two people.

“Oi, isn’t this expensive?”

“What a clueless Demon King you are. Does anybody even ask about the price at times like these? It cost 5000 yen, hardly expensive.”

The figure Emi had flatly stated was bigger than any amount Maou had imagined, and his legs went soft.

“Five... you, you spent 5000 on a single umbrella... The one I gave you was just something I found hanging on a nearby mailbox on my way home!”

“Shut up! Frankly speaking, the thought of my eternal nemesis using a picked-up umbrella is pretty hard to bear! If you’re the Demon King, you ought to act like him and use something more fitting to your station!”

“Hm, well, you do have a point... still, I see. 5000 yen, huh. Amazing. It doesn’t look like its in the same class of object as that beat-up umbrella. May I open up the wrapping?”

“It’s for you, so you decide!”

Emi did not look at Maou. Instead, she frowned and looked away.

Maou opened the paper wrapping that had been securely fastened by sticky tape, folded it up and placed it in his pocket, and then opened up the umbrella.

“Ohhh, it’s huge! And it looks really sturdy! That thing I used earlier wasn’t even an umbrella!”

Maou was audibly moved. Emi, who was peeking at him from the side, seemed quite happy with herself, given how the corner of her mouth had quirked up.

“...Then, I’ve said my piece.”

With that, Emi turned to leave. As Maou watched her back, he said:

”Really? Sorry for troubling you. Thanks.”

This thanks had come from the Demon King, but for some reason, Emi carefully filed it away inside her heart. She then turned around again.

“There’s one more thing.”

“Hm? What is it?”

She would never understand why she had chosen to smile at that moment.

“Hurry and make up with Chiho.”

Maou’s eyes went wide in surprise and he was speechless. Emi merely turned away once more, a satisfied look on her face.

“Then, see you around.”

And so, the Hero and the Demon King parted ways at the intersection, each headed on their respective ways home.

“Ah, you’re back, my Lord. Tonight’s dinner is thinly-fried eggs.”

“You know, you can lie to me at this point of time. At least call it thickly-fried or something!”

Only Ashiya, his strength restored, awaited him within the apartment. His brows stood on end as he saw the new umbrella in Maou’s hands. However, Maou seized the initiative and spoke before Ashiya could: “Someone else gave it to me! It’s a gift! I didn’t spend my own money on it!”

“A gift? And who would be willing to give such an expensive umbrella to you, my Lord? Some saintly philanthroper?”

“How dare you insult me in a roundabout way! It was, ah, someone paying back a good deed.”

With that, Maou opened the umbrella and stood it in the doorway. This was unlike the other umbrella which he could just hang up anywhere. He began to seriously consider buying an umbrella rack next time.

After that, he looked up in surprise, at someone else who was looking at him. The person who was doing so had a head of messy hair and was short of stature. He looked just like any other Japanese person, and he was Lucifer, squatting in the corner of the room and munching fried eggs.

He did not say anything, even after meeting Maou’s gaze. Maou asked dejectedly:

“Don’t you have anywhere to go?”

“...If I did, I wouldn’t be here eating fried eggs.”

“True, that. You *are* a wanted criminal in Japan, after all.”

While he had no idea what had happened to Olba, if he had been arrested in connection to those robberies, it was very likely that he would give up his accomplice, Lucifer.

The Japanese police probably would not take action based on Olba’s words, but Lucifer’s situation was still risky all the same.

“I’ve got a question for you. How did you connect to the computers at Emi’s workplace?”

“...Eh?”

Lucifer tilted his head.

“Someone like you might be able to do a great deal. If you can help me recover my power, I could consider keeping you around.”

After that, in a place called Sasazuka in Tokyo's Shibuya, Maou returned to his usual yet unusual daily life.

On the morning after the battle, Maou and Ashiya paid a visit to the landlady Shiba Miki's home. The two of them were clearly quite mindful of their landlady, who knew their true identities and who was superhuman in many ways.

It was quite likely that the mysterious text which had come with Chiho's own had originated from their all-knowing landlady.

As they gingerly pressed the doorbell, they steeled themselves to speak face to face with the landlady, but there was no response from the inside. After that, Ashiya noticed a note on the door.

『Mikitty wishes to inform the tenants of the Villarosa Sasazuka that I am overseas on business. For any inquiries, please contact the real estate management company below.』

What made Maou and Ashiya frown was not the fact that the landlady was not around, but that she had signed the note with a crimson lip-print.

If she was overseas, that meant she would not be back for a while. With a face like hers, would she be stopped at the customs on suspicion of being a murder weapon? All sorts of useless worries popped up in their minds.

Maou had gone to the store that day to work, and while Chiho had seemed a little out of it that night, for the most part their relationship had returned to normal.

After cleaning the house and doing the laundry, Ashiya walked the Golden Course to the art gallery and supermarket, as usual.

“Good morning, Emi. It'd be nice if nothing happened today.”

Rika had said that jokingly to Emi when they had set out for work

that day. Emi, on the other hand, was looking at Rika's face.

“Rika... actually...:

And then she had apologized to Rika for getting the shirt she had borrowed from her dirty and ripped because she had gotten into an accident. Rika was not angry, however. She merely smiled.

“Really, at a closer look, you're covered in bruises... Emi, it's a miracle you're still alive.”

Emi had not healed all the wounds she had taken during her battle with Lucifer.

After all, she had been hurt during the tunnel collapse incident a couple of days ago. It would be strange if her injuries were all gone after just a couple of days.

“It was an old shirt, so you don't have to worry about it. If it bothers you, then just line up with me for lunch today.”

Rika smiled, and then patted Emi on the back. Emi nodded, feeling like a weight had lifted off her shoulders. They chatted for awhile, and then it was time for work.

After checking the morning mail, Emi's extension rang. She immediately switched to working mode and answered the phone: “Thank you for your call. This is DoCoDeMo Customer Enquiry Telephone Operator Yusa at your...”

『Oh, awesome! It really connected!』

“...Eh?”

She had heard that voice countless times, but she did not want it to become familiar.

『Oi~ Emi, can you hear me~』

“!”

Emi stopped breathing for a moment as the blood rushed to her head.

『Oya~ That's pinpoint targeting for you. You might be even better than I expected!』

“What the hell are you doing? I'm working now!”

『Don't be so mad, it's an experiment, just an experiment.』

“What kind of experiment?”

『Hacking.』

“Hah... eh?”

『Urushihara said he could directly connect to your extension last time was because he directly accessed your company's mainframe through a net cafe's computer. When I heard that, I figured that I could do a lot of things with a computer at home. That's the first time I've ever paid for something that expensive with credit card installments.』

Emi suddenly realised her temples were pulsing, but she could not stop it.

“I've got a lot of things to ask you. Firstly, who's Urushihara?”

『Lucifer, of course. He's surprisingly good with computers.』

“As if I'd know! What the hell are you talking about?!”

『Still, we figured it would be safer to start with someone familiar. Sorry to disturb you.』

Maou's casual tone made Emi start banging on her table.

“Someone familiar? Are you kidding me?! Why do I have to...”

『What's wrong? You're the first person I met who deals with me equally and who I know well, so I happened to think of you. Sorry, and see you.』

After saying his piece, Maou promptly hung up.

Full of anger and with nowhere to vent it, Emi groaned.

“Hey... Emi, what happened?” Rika nervously asked.

“Nothing!!!”

Emi's nigh-hysterical shout scared the office workers into a huddle.

“Ah~ that was fun. Alright, I'm heading to work. Urushihara, get used to working the computer,” Maou said smugly, as he took off the microphone earpiece.

“...It's an old model.”

Lucifer, or rather, Urushihara Hanzo, had been allowed to stay in the Demon King's Castle due to his ability to provide IT support. He was clearly dissatisfied at the cheap computer Maou had bought from Akihabara, with its OS that was two generations out of date. The computer he had used in the netcafe was far more modern than this.

“I went out of my way to buy this for you! The internet connection was just hooked up today! How much money do you think this all cost?”

“We could have gotten a much better deal on the CPU if we'd bought it from the internet company. Couldn't you have done more?”

“You're pretty cocky for a wanted man. If you want something newer, then find something to replenish my mana. Get to work!”

“Seriously... why do I have to obey human laws, anyway?”

Maou and Ashiya looked at each other as they heard Urushihara grumble, and then they laughed.

“You know, we both thought the same way once.”

“Indeed. For some reason it feels like a long time has passed.”

Suddenly, Ashiya glanced at the 500 yen wall clock he had bought from a 100 yen store.

“Demon King-sama, it’s time for work.”

With that, he graciously opened the door.

“I’m tired of pepper fries! Bring something else back!”

“Tonight’s dinner will be egg drop soup. Please be careful, my Lord.”

Under the eyes of Urushihara, with his selfish request, and Ashiya, who had refined his house-husbandry to a state of sublime perfection, Maou once more rode Dullahan-go to work in high spirits.

For the six-tatami Demon King’s Castle, just five minutes’ walk from Sasazuka Station, today would be another peaceful day.

AUTHOR, AFTERWORD –AND YOU–

After making a deal with the devil, the author protested, “if you take that, it doesn’t matter even if my wish comes true!” as he faced a demand to hand over his life and his soul.

The author called Wagahara Satoshi had a contract with the demon of demons–the Demon King–to become an author.

Fortunately, a Hero with the blood of an angel was watching over him from the side, and because of that, the author did not lose his life on the spot. However, the Hero and the Demon King turned as one to the author and said, “Hand over your life”.

The author became what he was due to his contract with them. He felt that it was a reasonable price to pay, but after fulfilling that part of the bargain, he was compelled to give them a dwelling place, food, clothes, a workplace, and many other escalating demands.

Not only did he become an author, he even entered the world of words, flying on silver wings to obediently and steadily satisfy their demands.

While doing this and that, the author ended up handing his life to them anyway. The author handed them his limited lifespan and all of his life. That’s a devil’s agreement for you. Regretfully, he had ended up giving his life to them without knowing it.

However, the Demon King was truly a King of Demons, whose greed was insatiable. He decreed that the author’s life alone was not enough.

Araki-san, the editor who served as the composer of the agreement with the Demon King. 029-san, who drew their clothing, homes, workplaces, and bodies. And then he also demanded the lives of everyone involved in the publishing process.

Everyone accepted that demand and gave the Demon King part of

their lives.

The author said, “You ought to be able to live on this.”

However, this time, it was the Hero who placed an even more onerous requirement before him.

“We don’t have enough of the most important thing. Without it, we can’t say that we’re alive.”

But what was it then, the author asked. Thus, the Hero and the Demon King answered in unison:

“We want the lives of the readers.”

Their world could not become reality without the lives of the readers. Without that, nothing that the author and the production staff gave them would be of value. This time, I, as the author, have taken a bit of your lives from you, gentle readers.

In place of the time that was taken, I would be glad if the world, the lives, and the stories which you have read about could find a place in your heart.

Honestly, this author is truly unreasonable and spews madness.

After this, on behalf of the Hero, I wish to apologize to all the Sadaos in Japan.

The contact that this author made with the Demon King was to write a story of a group of friends who work hard and live happily every day.

Who knows, someone in your city might be a visitor from another world.

『はたらく魔王さま!』
巻末特別企画

履歴書集

履歴書



ふりがな	まおう さた" お
氏名	真奥 貞夫
考えた年	ことも月ない日生(満300歳) 性別 男
ふりがな	どうきょうと しふやく ささづか
現住所	東京都渋谷区笹塚X・X・X ヴィラ・ローザ"笹塚 201号室 魔王城
電話	060-0000-0666

年	月	学歴・職歴
日本換算 寛保元年～	寛政 11年頃	魔界の各地を転戦
明治3年		魔界の王就任
平成2×年		魔界の王を引退
平成2×年		マグロナルド"幡ヶ谷駅前店 アルバイト
平成2×年		現職

資格	魔界一級建築士、デュランチャリオット普通免許、危険魔法薬取扱士、ワイバーンライセンス、悪魔医師、魔会計士、中小魔族診断士、魔道アナリスト		
特技・趣味	世界征服、接客業、語学		
志望動機	マグロナルドの仕事で得た経験を、世界征服に生かしたい。		
本人希望欄	うまい飯を食いたい。		
通勤時間	デュラン号をもてれば、ものの10分もかからない。	扶養家族の有無	魔王軍の全軍勢
		保護者の氏名	芦屋四郎

勝手に書き込むなよ！ by 真奥

Name: Maou Sadao

DOB: Never *Gave It* Much Thought (~300 years old) **Sex:** Male

Address: Tokyo, Shibuya, Sasazuka X.X.X

Villarosa Sasazuka Rm 201

Demon King's Castle

Tel no: 060-0000-0666

Education and Work Experience: (Converted to Japanese eras) Kanpo^{|1|} 01st year - Kansei^{|2|} 11th~ year: Fighting battles throughout the Demon Realm Meiji^{|3|} 03rd year: Became Demon King Heisei^{|4|} 2Xth year: Retired from position of Demon King Heisei 2Xth year: Part-time at Hatagaya Station MgRonald's Heisei 2Xth year: Current Position

Qualifications:

First-class Engineer of the Demon Realm
Dullahan Chariot License Dangerous Magical
Drug Administrator Wyvern License

Demon Doctor

Demon Accountant

Mid/Lesser Demon Diagnostician Magic Analyst

Skills and Hobbies: World Domination, Hospitality, Language Studies

Reasons for seeking employment: Obtaining experience at McGonald's to serve as a foundation for world conquest **Personal Aspirations:** To eat tasty food **Commuting time:** Within 10 minutes on Dullahan-go **Dependents:** Whole of the Demon Army **Name of Guardian:** Ashiya Shiro

- Don't go filling this in on your own! by Maou

履歴書



ふりがな	ゆ さ え み
氏 名	遊佐 恵美
—年—月—日 生 (満 歳) 性別	—年—月—日 秋 日生 (満 17 歳) 性別 女
ふりがな	とうきょうとすぎなみくえいふくちやう
現 住 所	適当すぎんだろ by 真奥 東京都杉並区永福町 ♠-♠-♠ ア-バン・ハイツ永福町 501号室 電 話 090-xxxx-0211

17 だ、けど、20、てことにしといて。

年	月	学歴・職歴
平成×年		エンテ・イスラ西大陸の寒村に生まれる
平成×年		家事手伝い
平成1×年		教会騎士団隊長職 就任
平成1×年		勇者 就任
平成2×年		株式会社ドコデモグループお客様相談センター契約社員 現職

資格	助祭資格、穀物選別士、TOEIC 700点	
特技・趣味	刃物研ぎ、除霊、時代劇鑑賞、語学、魔王討伐 趣味かよ by 真奥 特技よ by 恵美	
志望動機	勇者として当然の勤めよ。 そんなん！ by 真奥	
本人希望欄	魔王を倒せるなら、どんな環境でも耐えてみせるわ。 でも、お風呂はもうちょっと広いと嬉しいけど。	
通勤時間	最寄り駅は京王井の頭線 永福町駅 電車と徒歩で約25分	扶養家族の有無 なし 保護者の氏名 鈴木梨香 おい by 真奥 何か女句あるの？ by 恵美

Name: Yusa Emi

DOB: Autumn (actually 17 years old, but pretends to be 20 because it's a pain otherwise)

- Isn't this a bit too vague? by Maou
- Don't write as you please! by Emi

Sex: Female

Address: Tokyo, Suginami, Eifuku-cho X.X.X

Urban Heights Eifuku-cho Rm 501

Tel no: 090-XXXX-0211

Education and Work Experience: Heisei 0Xth year: Born in poor village on Western Continent
Heisei 0Xth year: Helped with housework
Heisei 1Xth year: Became Captain of Church Knights
Heisei 1Xth year: Became Hero
Heisei 2Xth year: DoCoDeMo customer service operator (Current Position)

Qualifications:

Deacon qualifications

Grains sorting expert

TOEIC 700 points

Skills and Hobbies:

Sharpening bladed objects Exorcisms

Period dramas

Slaying the Demon King

- Are you sure this counts as a hobby? by Maou
- It's a special skill by Emi
- How could you! by Maou

Reasons for seeking employment: It is only natural as befits the Hero **Personal Aspirations:** I can endure any environment as long as I can defeat the Demon King. However, I'd be happier with a bigger bathtub.

Commuting time: Closest stop to my home is the Eifuku-cho station of the Keio-Inokashira line, so 25 minutes by train + foot **Dependents:** None
Name of Guardian: Suzuki Rika

- Oi by Maou
- Got a problem with that? by Emi

履歴書



ふりがな	あしやしろ			
氏名	芦屋四郎			
年	月	日生 (満1500歳)	性別	男
ふりがな	日本に来た日はいつか覚えてない。			
現住所	東京都渋谷区笹塚X・X・X ヴィラ・ローザ笹塚201号室			
魔王城真奥方				
携帯持てよ by 真奥				
電話	必要ありません			

年	月	学歴・職歴
		日本の元号以前から、魔界の一兵卒として各地を転戦
宝暦くらい		現魔王サタンの参謀として軍門に下る
嘉永くらい		四天王結成
明治		悪魔大元帥就任 エンテ・イスラ東方攻略軍総司令就任
平成2×年		エンテ・イスラ東方攻略軍総司令解任
平成2×年		無職、主夫

資格	調魔師免許、ワイバーン大型免許、魔道具鍛冶師、危険魔法薬取扱士、魔界福祉士、 ダークヘルパー、魔育士、魔界文書検定一級、魔王城秘書検定一級、マジックコーディネーター				
特技・趣味	世界征服の手伝い。掃除、洗濯、炊事、念動力。				
志望動機	志望してこうなった覚えはないのですが……。				
本人希望欄	一刻も早く、魔王様にその名に相応しい覇業にお戻りいただきたい。 コンロをIHにしたい。魚グリルが欲しい。				
通勤時間	主夫は目覚めた瞬間から働き始めます。	扶養家族の有無	私の存在が、魔王様に かかる税を軽くしている	保護者の氏名	私が保護者だ！

誰のだよ！

by 真奥

Name: Ashiya Shiro

DOB: (forgot the exact date I arrived in Japan) (~1500 years old) **Sex:** Male

Address: Tokyo, Shibuya, Sasazuka X.X.X

Villarosa Sasazuka Rm 201

Demon King's Castle

Tel no: I don't need one

- Get a cell phone! by Maou

Education and Work Experience: Before Japan had eras, I was a soldier fighting for all sides.

Horeki^{|5|} era: Became the strategist for the current Demon King Kaei^{|6|} era: Formed the Four Heavenly Kings Meiji^{|7|} era: Became Demon General, became Supreme Commander of Ente Isla Eastern Continent Invasion Force Heisei^{|8|} 2Xth year: Retired from being Supreme Commander of Ente Isla Eastern Continent Invasion Force Heisei 2Xth year: Jobless, Househusband

Qualifications:

Magic Tuning License

Large Wyvern License

Magic Item Crafter

Dangerous Magical Drug Administrator Demon
Realm Prosperity Planner Protector of Darkness

Monster Caretaker

Demon Realm Literature Appraiser 1st class
Magic Coordinator

Skills and Hobbies:

Aiding in world conquest Cleaning

Cooking

Telekinesis

Reasons for seeking employment: I don't recall applying for such...

Personal Aspirations: To return Demon King-sama to the path of conquest which best suits his dignified self. I'd also like a microwave and a fish griller.

Commuting time: A househusband is at work from the moment he opens his eyes.

Dependents: My purpose in life is to reduce the tax burden on Demon King-sama.

Name of Guardian: I am the guardian!

- Whose guardian are you?! by Maou

履歴書



ふりがな ささき ちほ

氏 名

佐々木 千穂

平成XX年 9月10日生(満16歳) 性別 女

ふりがな とうきょうと しぶやく はたがや

現 住 所

東京都 渋谷区

巾着ヶ谷 □-□-□

電 話 090-△△△△-1000

年	月	学歴・職歴
平成XX年	3	渋谷区立 笹幡中学校卒業
平成XX年	4	東京都立 笹幡北高等学校入学
平成XX年		二年生在学中

資格	英語検定三級、漢字検定準二級	
特技・趣味	弓道初段、掃除、料理、音楽鑑賞	
志望動機	学生生活をより充実させるため、アルバイトを通じて社会経験を積みたいと思いました。あと、小さいころから、マクドのお姉さんが憧れでした。	
本人希望欄	とにかく、精一杯がんばりますっ! あ、あと、その、できればシフトは真実さんと一緒にが……あ、な、なんでもありません!	
通勤時間	徒歩10分	扶養家族の有無 なし
		保護者の氏名 佐々木千一(父) 佐々木里穂(母)

Name: Sasaki Chiho

DOB: Heisei 09th Year 10th month (16 years old)

Sex: Female

Address: Tokyo, Shibuya, Hatagaya X.X.X

Tel no: 090-XXXX-1000

Education and Work Experience: Heisei XXth year 3rd month: Graduated from Shibuya Sasahata Middle School Heisei XXth year 4th month: Entered Tokyo Sasahata North High School Heisei XXth year: 2nd year of high school

Qualifications:

English Proficiency Level 3

Kanji Proficiency Level Pre-2

Skills and Hobbies:

Kyudo 1st dan

Cleaning

Music Appreciation

Reasons for seeking employment: To live a more full student life and obtain social experience by working part-time. Also I admired Mg-Oneechan since I was young.

Personal Aspirations: I just want to do a good job! Also, er, if it's possible, I'd like to work with Maou-san... Ah, pretend I didn't say anything!

Commuting time: 10 minutes by foot
Dependents: None **Name of Guardian:**

Sasaki Senichi (father) Sasaki Rihoko (mother)



TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

Chapter 1

[1] JP apartments use tatami mats for flooring and the number of them determines the room's size.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatami>

[2] The pun is that Maou is both a Japanese surname and “Demon King” in Japanese

[3] **https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_Size_Me**

[4] -Go is a term of endearment commonly applied as a suffix for a vehicle name

[5] UNIxLO is a parody of UNIQLO, a Japanese clothing brand

[6] The saying is 臥薪嘗膽. It's Chinese.

[7] “miser” here refers to 铁公鸡 - 一毛不拔. It's a Chinese thing.

[8] A parody of DoCoMo, a Japanese mobile phone service provider

CHAPTER 2

[1] Raging Flow reads as “Doutouryu” in Japanese, which is a parody of Doutor Coffee.

[2] “Acting up” sounds like “Central Rift Belt” in JP

[3] Maou and Demon King are homophones in JP

[4] Specifically, an Asian black bear

[5] The Great Hanshin Earthquake, or the Kobe Earthquake

CHAPTER 3

[1] parody of Vuitton

[2] Parody of Gintako, a takoyaki chain

CHARACTER

[1] Kanpo era: 1741-1744

[2] Kansei era: 1789-1801

[3] Meiji era: 1868-1912

[4] Heisei: 1989-present

[5] Horeki era: 1751-1764

[6] Kaei era: 1848-1854

[7] Meiji era: 1868-1912

[8] Heisei: 1989-present